



SAG-SEED AWARD  
WINNER 2016



## Unique Quality Product Enterprise

Empowering marginalised women in Ghana  
through reviving the cultivation of indigenous crops



**SEED**

promoting entrepreneurship  
for sustainable development

Founding Partners



# About SEED

SEED promotes eco-inclusive solutions of small and growing enterprises in support to sustainable development by increasing their organisational resilience in local, national and regional markets and shaping an enabling environment.

SEED was founded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg and is hosted by adelphi research gGmbH, based in Berlin, Germany.

adelphi research (AR) is a leading think-and-do tank for policy analysis and strategy consulting. The institution offers creative solutions and services regarding global environment and development challenges for policy, business, and civil society communities.



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Feb 2018



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### About SWITCH Africa Green

The overall objective of SWITCH Africa Green (SAG) is to support 6 countries in Africa to achieve sustainable development by engaging in transition towards an inclusive green economy, based on sustainable consumption and production patterns, while generating growth, creating decent jobs and reducing poverty. The objective will be achieved through support to private sector led inclusive green growth. SAG is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme with the assistance of the European Union.

## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### Gender Inequality

In recent years has achieved sustained economic growth and reduced the number of people living in poverty. However, challenges such as gender inequality persist. The government of Ghana has achieved gender parity in primary education in most regions. However, women continue to have limited access to education and employment opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Many Ghanaian women continue to depend on men in their communities for socio-economic well-being. Over the coming years, discrimination in public decision-making and sexual harassment are challenges that require attention. Achieving gender equality is not only important to human rights agendas, but impacts on other areas of social and economic development.

### Food insecurity and malnutrition

Despite Ghana's steady growth in recent years, not all regions have benefited. Many parts of the country continue to face challenges such as food insecurity. Food insecurity is compounded by several factors, including natural occurrences such as droughts and floods, and social and economic factors such as poverty or the lack of agricultural technology. The northern regions of Ghana, where there is generally poor soil quality, are especially challenged by heavy rain seasons with flooding and intense dry seasons with long-lasting droughts.<sup>2</sup> The northern, north-eastern and north-western regions are three of the poorest in Ghana. In these regions, six out of ten people live in poverty<sup>1</sup>.

Food insecurity has resulted in malnutrition, which is especially damaging to child development. In Ghana's poorest regions, four out of ten children aged five years or younger are chronically malnourished.<sup>3</sup>

1 UNDP 2015. [www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/post-2015/sdg-overview/goal-5.html](http://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/post-2015/sdg-overview/goal-5.html)

2 UN 2017. <http://gh.one.un.org/content/unct/ghana/en/home/our-work/food-security-and-nutrition.htm>

3 Ghana Statistical Service 2015. <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/publications/POVERTY%20MAP%20FOR%20GHANA-05102015.pdf>

## Creating innovative so

## HOW THE BUSINESS WORKS

**Unique Quality Product Enterprise (UQE)** is an eco-inclusive enterprise located in Tamale in northern Ghana. Its business model is based on a market-leading approach to promote the production and processing of the cereal grain fonio. Fonio was once a major food crop across West Africa and is known for its nutritional value, taste and adaptability to local climate and soil conditions. However, the introduction of rice and other cereal crops largely replaced fonio. UQE believes in fonio's commercial potential and identified community members who were still growing the crop for local consumption. The enterprise engaged with local landholders and wider communities to gain access to infertile, unused land for women farmers. UQE promotes the expansion and harvesting of fonio crops using traditional methods. The enterprise established a partnership with a local women's association to support its activities by employing the women members to process raw fonio. UQE has created a market for fonio by purchasing the crop in bulk from farmers, paying a processing fee to the processors, and then selling the product under the label *Dim Fonio* to domestic and international markets.

### Key Facts:

- Location: Tamale, Northern Ghana
- Founded: 2012
- Annual turnover: 42,000 USD
- Workers: 29 (7 full time, 20 part time, 2 casual)
- Female workforce: 80%
- Women Farmer Suppliers: 600
- Tonnes of Fonio Produced: 78 tonnes (2017)



# Solutions to local challenges

Watch how we do it!



” It’s a climate resilient crop, it has lots of nutritional properties missing in today’s cereals and it’s a woman’s crop in my area, so it indirectly gives access to land to women. “

*Salma Abdulai, Founder and CEO,  
Unique Quality Product Enterprise*



# The power of partnerships



## National Business

The **Pagsung Women Association (PWA)** was founded in 2008, with the goal to empower women in northern Ghana. The organisation is owned and run by shea butter processing groups, totalling approximately 1500 members. The partnership between PWA and UQE was established to transfer the task of fonio processing to PWA's members. UQE pays a fee to PWA members for this processing service. This enables UQE to significantly increase its income and diversify its income sources to support income security. Income diversification ensures that parents are able to reliably pay for their children's education. In some cases processors have created additional income generating activities using their savings. As a result of the collaboration, women gain skills and knowledge of raw fonio processing, quality control, food safety and hygiene standards. The partnership with UQE helps PWA to achieve their objective to empower women in northern Ghana. UQE gains access to infrastructure required to process fonio through the collaboration.



## Research institution

**Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Horticultural Department)** works with UQE and PWA to carry out the laboratory tests required to certify fonio sold within Ghana and internationally. Testing is required for every batch of processed fonio. During the early stages of enterprise development, the research institution provided discounts on testing and offered the enterprise quality control training.

*Learn more about the partnership!*





## International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

**Send Ghana** is an international NGO that promotes good governance and equality in Ghana. The NGO provided training support to 200 women in agronomic and climate-smart practices for fonio production. The training was delivered in three districts where fonio is produced on degraded land.

The partnership with Send Ghana has enabled UQE to train more women in raw fonio production processes and Send Ghana to reach more women farmers. Send Ghana depends on this collaboration to reach its goals related to rural female empowerment.

Discover the partnership with SEED!



“ Developing our business plan with SEED resulted directly in getting funding for key infrastructure. ”

*Salma Abdulai, Founder and CEO, Unique Quality Product Enterprise*

“ Partnerships play a very key role. What it did for us was to reduce our costs of production and costs of processing. ”

*Salma Abdulai, Founder and CEO, Unique Quality Product Enterprise*

# Creating impact



## SOCIAL IMPACT

The main social target of UQE is to improve the livelihoods of women in rural communities in northern Ghana. Traditionally, women in the communities do not have access to their own land. In most cases they work as labourers on men's farms. UQE has and continues to engage with local chiefs and community leaders to assist hundreds of women to use infertile, abandoned communal land. Once women have access to the land, they can use it to grow and sell fonio to UQE.

### Key impacts

- Provides employment for 23 local women
- Provides income for 20 processing workers
- 600 farmers planting fonio, including 409 women
- Improved household access to food for farmers and processing workers



## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The main economic objective of UQE is to ensure the economic empowerment of local women through cultivating, harvesting and processing fonio. Female farmers gain direct economic benefits through the sale of their raw produce to UQE. Processors gain income by converting the raw materials into saleable, high-quality products. UQE serves as an end-market provider, saving farmers time and resources. Many women have used the income to fund their children's education and take on additional income generating activities, such as the sale of food products and raising animals.

### Key impacts

- Produced 78 tonnes of fonio in 2017
- Increased female farmers income
- Generated \$48,000 USD in sales
- Created 11 business-to-business relationships across Ghana, with a further 10 pending

# Sustainable development goals

## SDG 1

### Good health and wellbeing

UQE encourages fonio production in rural communities on less fertile land. The crop has both commercial and sustenance value and it helps to re-establish fertile soil. The harvesting and processing of fonio provides communities with local employment and food sources.

## SDG 9

### Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

UQE is continually developing its supply chain and infrastructure for the production, processing and sale of fonio. UQE has made significant strides to revive the knowledge and skills for planting, harvesting and processing the traditional cereal.



## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

UQE's main environmental objectives are to promote and implement sustainable land management, regenerate formerly infertile lands, and improve the climate resilience of land and communities. Fonio is a versatile and resistant crop that can be grown on marginal and non-fertile lands. Its yield is not affected by poor soil conditions or climatic variations such as drought and flood. Farmers receive training and information on land management practices to sustainably produce sustainable fonio.

### Key impacts

- Use of over 600 acres of formerly marginal lands for fonio production
- Increased crop diversification and improved climate resilience



### SDG 10

#### Decent work and Economic Growth

UQE facilitates the access of rural women to land and consistent income. The enterprise provides skills and training in production, harvesting and processing and creates employment opportunities for local women at all stages.

See how we create impact!



“ People said it was impossible. But it happened. The culture is still there, the tradition is still there, but women have access to land today.

*Salma Abdulai, Founder and CEO, Unique Quality Product Enterprise*



## FUTURE PLANS

- Increase amount of marginal land under fonio production to 1,500 acres by 2019
- Increase number of women farmers producing fonio
- Expand range of fonio-related products
- Create 10 more business-to-business relationships across northern Ghana
- Improve processing infrastructure and develop the value chain
- Create more partnerships with relevant partners to improve value chain sustainability



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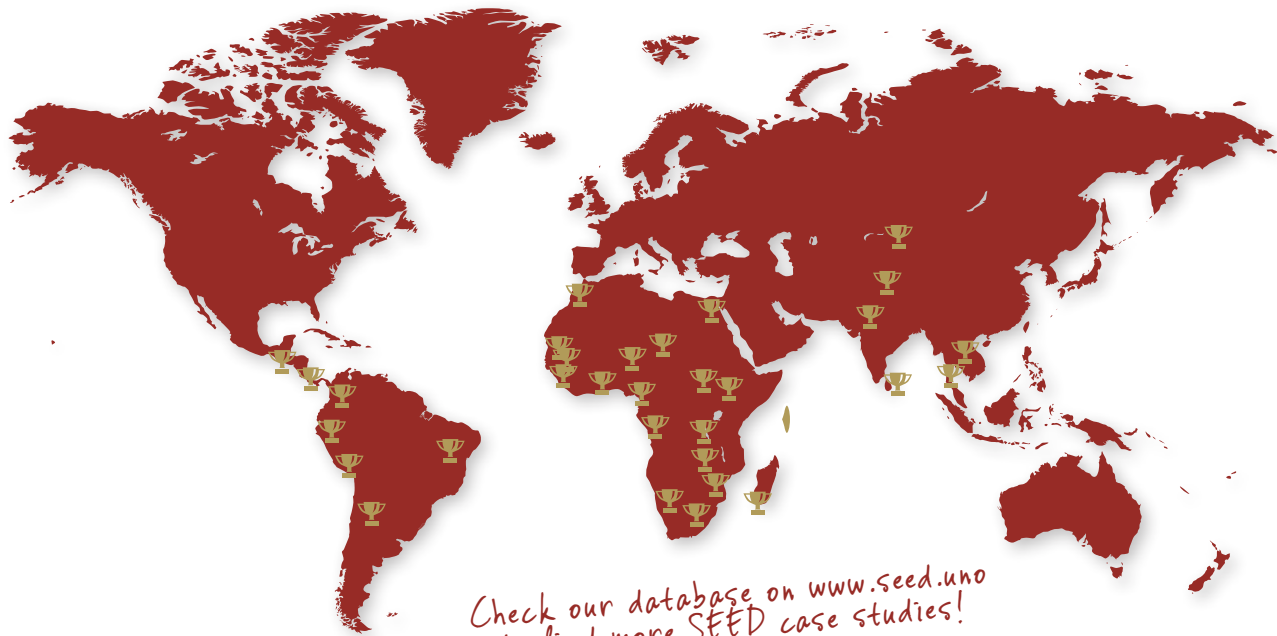
## SEED Case Studies Series

### Demonstrating Sustainable Development on the Ground through Locally-Driven Eco-Inclusive Enterprises

Eco-inclusive enterprises, also known as green and social enterprises, have a critical role to play in achieving a global Green and Inclusive Economy, tackling the Sustainable Development Goals or implementing the Paris Agreement. By embracing the added values of social improvement and resource management eco-inclusive enterprises that have won a SEED Award are living proof that entrepreneurial partnerships between various stakeholders can create innovative and novel solutions for delivering sustainable development at the grassroots level and be economically sustainable.

Since 2005, SEED has supported over **240 Award Winners in 37 countries**. While the value of eco-inclusive enterprises in delivering sustainable development is increasingly recognised and harnessed in the development sphere, there is still very little data available on the triple bottom line impact of these enterprises and their contribution to sustainable development. The SEED Case Studies are designed to help fill that gap by generating insights for policy and decision-makers on the role of green and inclusive enterprises in achieving sustainable development, and on enabling factors that can help them overcome barriers, reach scale and replicate.





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## SEED Founding Partners



## SEED Partners

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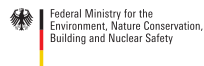


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