



Women in the Residential Construction Sector in Ghana

Uniterra is a Canadian volunteer cooperation and international development program that is jointly operated by WUSC (World University Service of Canada) and CECI (the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The program supports inclusive economic development to benefit women and youth in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Uniterra works with key private, public, and civil society partners to facilitate growth and change in markets that have the greatest impact on the marginalized.

27 year old Doris Deku has her own tiling business in the residential construction sector. She employs four professional tilers and is currently training four apprentices, including two young women. A professional tiler herself, she makes a decent living and is able to provide for herself and her young daughter. It has taken her courage and determination to make it in a male-dominated sector and she wants to see more women follow in her footsteps.

The Uniterra Program supports the residential construction sector in Ghana as it stimulates employment, income diversification and satisfies the unmet demand for skilled labour. Ghana requires, by the year 2025, approximately 4 million house-units, to keep pace with the current population growth rate. The Uniterra Program has partnered with various actors of the sector, including training providers, construction actors, and complementary suppliers.

A sector that attracts few women

The residential construction value chain is quite well structured, though there is a lack of synergy and collaboration between the actors. Most importantly, a number of key issues are preventing youth and women from getting involved in this sector and benefiting from its many opportunities. First, there is a negative stigma attached to working in construction; not only is this sector viewed as being unattractive and unprestigious, but it is also perceived to be unsafe by a large number of women and youth. Second, there is a gap between the students coming out of TVET institutions and the labour market in terms of both practical skills and soft skills, especially in the peri-urban areas.

Program

Volunteer Cooperation Program 2015-2020

Date

2019

Implementing Partner

Council for Technical and Vocational Educational Training (COTVET), Farm Radio International (FRI), Artisans Association of Ghana (AAG), Integrated Community Centres for Employment (ICCES) and TVET centres

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Key Themes of the Story

Women inclusion in non traditional trades, training in construction trades



This project contributes to the Sustainable Development Objectives:
4 – Quality Education;
5 – Gender Equality;
8 – Decent work and economic growth, and
10 – Reduced inequalities.



Bunmie Afolabi first came to Ghana for a few months as a student volunteer with the partner AAG to do soft skill development for youth artisans, as well as support the development of the TVET mentorship program. Bunmie came back in 2019 for a second mandate, this time as a long term volunteer, to implement the mentorship program and contribute to the development of gender equality clubs.

Communications, Practicum, Gender and Mentorship

The Unitererra Program has established an important partnership with the Artisans Association for Ghana (AAG) — a 7,000 member-based association, working as a network of artisans, that trains and supports the certification of unskilled youth. AAG works through 6 month apprenticeships, directly with master artisans. As a result, apprentices learn the trade in a work environment and acquire not only the skills necessary to their trade, including entrepreneurial skills, but also a general knowledge of the role of artisans within the residential construction sector. AAG has trained a total of 6,853 young artisans, including 1,045 women (15%), over a period of 5 years.

As the construction sector has difficulty reaching youth, especially young women who are unaware of the opportunities this sector has to offer them, the Unitererra Program facilitated gender equality training with all of its partners, to promote women in men dominated trade areas. As a result of this training, AAG has added many activities geared towards young women to its annual programming.

To address the negative perceptions and promote the essential role women and youth can play in the sector, the Unitererra Program and its strategic partner Farm Radio International developed a communication for scale strategy, comprised of four radio programs, broadcasted in the local language, in the Greater Accra area. The six-to-eight-week-long radio shows focus on important topics, from raising awareness on training and job opportunities, to construction related quizzes and competitions, and generating discussions in the communities. The first three programs reached 1,464,353 people in Greater Accra and 1,364,833 in Tamale, in the north of the country.

To further promote the involvement of women and young girls, a Mentorship and Coaching Program has been developed in partnership with AAG. This program aims to pair young girls in residential construction with more experienced and successful female role models in the sector, to provide encouragement, guidance and support.

Results

- Through the creation of the Residential Construction Sector Committee, the Unitererra Program facilitates a deeper collaboration between all of the actors, resulting in several formal partnerships: AAG and GRATIS Foundation (a leader in the designing, manufacturing, and selling of precision agro, food processing and sanitation equipment) and AAG and Integrated Community Centres for Employment (ICCES).
- A considerable number of women in TVET are demonstrating increased self-confidence in their ability to speak up about women's empowerment. These women have in turn risen to be role models, publicly engaging their respective communities and providing support to other girls in male dominated trades.
- A *Gender in TVET Manual*, developed by a Unitererra volunteer in collaboration with the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), and a *Gender Mainstreaming Guide* for Institutions were used to train TVET teachers, students, and generate gender champions on campuses.
- To address the unsafe nature of the sector, COTVET developed, with the support of Unitererra volunteers, an *Occupational Health and Safety Manual* to be rolled out in TVET schools and institutions. Three workshops have been given so far, reaching 260 artisans and apprentices.

Scaling-up, Replication, Sustainability and Innovation

The residential construction sector is prospering. Through the use of radio programs, women are now more aware of the opportunities offered to them by the sector. Core actors, such as AAG and the TVET support actors have acquired gender training skills and mainstreamed gender equality throughout their activities. They are equipped to foster gender champions and to use them as role models to attract more women to the sector.