

A Ghanaian Working Mother's Story: A Farmer Improves Her Harvests to Pull Her Family Out of Poverty

Barbara Ayisa farms in her village of Affumkrom in the Akwapim District of Ghana. She is one of 48 farmers of the Affumkrom Vegetable Growers' Association who, earlier this year, received seeds, fertilizers, grain storage bags, and farming tools as part of the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact with the Government of Ghana. Barbara and her colleagues are some of over 16,750 small-holder farmers who have been trained to date and have received these incentive packages, as part of the transformational Agriculture project. In this particular village, over 40 percent of the farmers receiving technical assistance are women who grow crops such as onions and maize.

Barbara Ayisa is proof that she can successfully be a mother and run her own farm. As part of this latest initiative, Barbara Ayisa received self-sealing plastic bags that will help her family store maize longer and sell it when the price improves. The trained farmers receive the supplies so that they can put into practice what they have learned about business planning and crop productivity.

Barbara works her field most of the day while taking care of her children. She receives some economic support from her husband, but he is engaged in other activities. When asked what kinds of additional assistance would be useful, she responded, "A daycare center would be very helpful as I could take care of my farm and then go home in the afternoon to take care of my children. I am currently doing both things, which is very hard." Like many women around the world, Barbara tries to manage her work while running her household and raising her children.



On April 7, Barbara was one of 48 farmers of the Affumkrom village who received seeds, fertilizers, grain storage bags, and farming tools as part of MCC's Agriculture project.

Barbara and other farmers in Ghana have benefited from training which showed that if they invest more in their crops on the front end, the results are higher yields and greater income. They also learned about the proper use of inputs, such as agrochemicals, which protects the farmers' health and safety and helps them achieve higher yields



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and improve the quality of their produce while still safeguarding the environment. This “value chain approach,” usually applied to cash crops, is being taught to farmers of staple crops. MCC recognizes that gender inequality is a significant constraint to economic growth and poverty reduction and is therefore committed to ensuring that farmers, like Barbara, are included in all stages of implementation in these value chains.

The MCC-funded program in Ghana is locally managed by the Millennium Development Authority (MIDA), the accountable entity in charge of implementing the Compact. The program has allocated \$241.5 million to agricultural productivity and value-added activities, providing farmer and enterprise training,

enhancing land tenure security, promoting irrigation development, improving post-harvest handling of agricultural produce, improving credit, and rehabilitating secondary/feeder roads. To date, over 16,750 farmers have received training. By the end of 2010, the program will have trained more than 60,000 farmers, aimed at directly benefitting more than 230,000 farmers, increasing their production of staple crops, such as maize, yams, cassava, cowpeas, and high-value crops, such as pineapples and summer vegetables.

MCC's investments along the supply chain in Ghana help rural businesses and farmers, including Barbara Ayisa and the thousands of other women farmers like her. This cooperation provides access to productive inputs, such as seeds, water, and fertilizers, helps overcome bottlenecks that hinder the ability to get produce from farm to market, and encourages engagement in higher-value production to ultimately bring about rural income growth that benefits them and their families.