

# A recipe for success: The story of the Banda-Borae women processing soya kebab

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## **Soya-Ghana PPP**

With the increasing demand for healthy and affordable proteins, women's processing organisations are in the lead of the partnership, looking at penetrating the market of soya-based products.

## **Summary**

**In this story, the authors focus on the women's soya processor organisation – following Rose, a strong leader, as the central figure. It describes the skills developed by the women through 2SCALE, especially cooperative and leadership skills, but also their new insights into marketing. This encouraged the women processors to develop close links with a producers' organisation to secure quality raw material and thereby guarantee their new brand and market outlet of nutritious soya kebab.**

Triggered by the recent rise in soya bean production in North-Eastern Ghana, Rose Mbo has become very enthusiastic about turning all those beans into delicious soya products. Rose, an energetic local business "champion", has worked hard to mobilise her colleague processors to form the Cumoban women processors' cooperative in Kpandai town as part of the 2SCALE project. Prior to the project's intervention, women processors were few in number and operated individually, processing limited volumes of soya beans. But now after two years of support, Rose and her colleagues are able to turn out large volumes of the unique soya products at an affordable price.

Rose and the other women in her group had attracted the support of 2SCALE through their business idea to strengthen themselves by forming a processing cooperative. They then improved their skills in soya processing and business management to drive up their sales and the level of nutrition in Kpandai and surrounding villages in Banda Borae district. The soya kebab is a highly nutritious, delicious and cheap meat substitute. It is similar in appearance and taste to meat kebabs and is gaining in popularity, especially among children and low income earners in the region.

## Strengthening capacities for collective action

For the cooperative to become successful, the processors needed to improve not only their skills and techniques in the actual making of kebabs, but in other ways as well. The coach supported by the trainer-mentor worked with them to improve their soft skills, such as group dynamics, leadership skills, building relationships with other organisations, as well as financial education. These enhanced skills helped the women to effectively manage their resources both as individuals and as a group. They also needed a reliable supply of quality soya beans to meet the predicted increased demand for kebabs.

The cooperative then joined the existing agribusiness cluster (ABC) in Banda Boraie district to source soya beans. This ABC is a network of various local-level actors (producers, input suppliers, credit union, etc.) in the soya value chain who were linked through business relationships and coaching facilitated by 2SCALE. The producers' organisations in this cluster were able to improve their soya bean production, and could meet the quality required by the processors. Being members of the ABC, Rose and her colleague processors are more comfortable working with these organised producers as opposed to sourcing from the open market. Through this relationship and with their strengthened soft skills, both parties now meet as equals to negotiate on prices and volumes. Some of the more promising processor members also got sponsored to visit processing facilities in the south to learn from agro-processing cooperatives there. Rose and her group received additional coaching to implement a village savings and loans association (VSLA). With this, the cooperative meets weekly to make contributions and to lend the mobilised savings to their members who are in need of credit to invest in the expansion of their businesses or to solve pressing needs. Through these savings, the group also plans to acquire some land where they will construct a shed to facilitate group processing.

## Branding and marketing soya kebab

The marketing of the soya kebab started with a pilot project, targeting low income and vulnerable consumers, often women, in the area. By developing a special brand for the soya kebab, and packaging and marketing it in a new way, the pilot aimed to reach more of these "bottom of the pyramid" (BoP) consumers, and in the process support the women processors. Rose and her colleagues suggested several brand names, and finally agreed on Daadi Soya Kebab. This brand was then promoted in every corner of Kpan-dai town and surrounding villages, and has now become a household name among school children. Two kiosks, one located at a cluster of schools and another close to a market, serve as outlets where consumers can buy the product. The cooperative members are now identified by their brand, which is printed on their containers, as well as on aprons and T-shirts. This effort has resulted in more than a 50%

increase in sales over a period of 6 months.

School children and other low income earners in the region now have access to affordable (and tasty) protein, which they missed in the past. The women processors have also provided employment opportunities to other women and youth, who they recruit as sales persons. For the women, working together has greatly strengthened them and this initiative has been an inspiration to other women as well. As Rose says, "We are now financially independent, and also support the upkeep of our families and households."

