

NEWSLETTER



GRANTS THAT GROW COMMUNITIES: THE LED STORY UNFOLDS

THE SOCO PROJECT LED GRANT AND WHY IT MATTER

The SOCO LED Grant program is implemented under the main subcomponent 1.2, Strategic Economic Investments for Local Economic Development. The LED Grant is a flagship intervention designed to

unlock economic potential at the grassroots level. It targets vulnerable communities across 48 MMDAs in Ghana's six northern regions, where climate risks, poverty, and limited economic opportunities threaten stability and inclusion. The grant supports Common Interest Groups (CIGs), including women's

associations, youth cooperatives, and artisanal groups, with funding and capacity-building support to undertake viable, income-generating activities such as agro-processing, vegetable farming, aquaculture, soap making, animal rearing, tailoring, shea butter production, and smock weaving

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To qualify, groups must be inclusive, properly registered, validated by their District Assembly, and present a profitable business plan. The LED Grant is more than just a funding mechanism, as it strengthens community cohesion by fostering collaboration, enterprise development, and ownership. It further promotes economic resilience and contributes to long-term peace and development in fragile border-zone communities by helping people generate income through locally grounded solutions.

FROM BUSINESS PLAN TO PAYOUT: THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS



The LED Grant journey under the SOCO Project is rigorous by design, ensuring that support reaches the right hands and translates into real impact. From identification of the CIGs to disbursement, the process empowers both local authorities and community groups to engage meaningfully in local economic transformation. The process begins at the community level with community sensitisation and identification of existing Common Interest Groups (CIGs). These groups, with membership ranging from 10 to 35, are identified by the Community Project Implementation Committee (CPIC) with technical support from the Business Advisory Centres (BAC) and validated by their District Assemblies based on inclusivity, legal registration, and financial readiness. Once validated, CIGs are guided by the BACs to develop structured business plans aligned with the district's priority income-generating activities.



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LED GRANT ROLLOUT: WHERE WE STAND

Under the SOCO LED Grant model, an amount of USD 6 million has been earmarked to support income-generating activities across 48 participating MMDAs in Ghana's six northern regions. The grant program initially targeted a total of 2,409 Common Interest Groups (CIGs), with a strong focus on women and youth-led enterprises. As of July 31, 2025, 1,760 groups have been verified and approved for support with GHS42,765,509 for the second cycle of implementation. Out of these groups, 373 CIGs have already received their first tranche of funding, constituting 21,270 individuals, of whom 17,864 are women. The grant disbursement is still ongoing and is expected to continue in 2026. Many of these women are leading or co-managing their groups, with a significant number engaged in agro-processing, soap making, shea butter production, and traditional crafts.



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Youth participation also remains strong, with groups actively involved in aquaculture, poultry farming, and climate-smart agriculture. The LED Grant continues to serve as a critical platform for inclusive economic empowerment, enabling women and young people not only to earn income but to lead in building resilient, self-sustaining communities.

FROM SETBACK TO COMEBACK: SAWARE FONIO GROUP RISES AGAIN

In Sangbana, a small community in the Chereponi District, the Saware Group is gradually reclaiming its place in the local economy. The group was established in 2015 with the goal of processing fonio to meet growing demand within the district. *The group's operations were halted following episodes of conflict that disrupted livelihoods across the area and a lack of funds to aid production. For years, their equipment lay idle, and the dream of running a functioning enterprise faded.* Through the first cycle of **SOCO's LED** Grant implementation, the group received targeted support, including fonio processing tools and equipment, to restart production.



With this intervention, Saware has moved from producing two bags of fonio per week to a consistent output of five, with the potential to scale up as local demand rises. The revival of Saware is not merely a story of increased output. It is an example of how timely support, when aligned with local potential, can restore enterprise, rebuild confidence, and contribute meaningfully to economic recovery at the community level.

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OBAAPA GROUNDNUT PASTE BY DAMBAI COOPERATIVE OF FASHION DESIGNERS

Once known solely for their creativity with fabric, the Dambai Cooperative of Fashion Designers in Gbanzaba has ventured boldly into food processing and made their mark. With support from the SOCO Project through the Krachi East Municipal Assembly, the group received GHS 28,500 under the LED Grant to launch a groundnut paste business. The first tranche (70%) has been invested in equipment, raw materials, and technical training. Today, the group proudly markets OBAAPA Groundnut Paste, a product that embodies integrity, hard work, and the spirit of women-led enterprise. Comprising 31 members (30 women and 1 man), the cooperative is a registered body under the Ghana Cooperative Society and runs a structured welfare system. Beyond boosting household incomes, the initiative has created a new source of pride and purpose for its members. What began as a pivot has become a thriving business, one that's helping shape a sustainable economic future for the Dambai community.

OBAAPA Group in the Gallery



Roasting of groundnut for milling



Peanut blanching by group members



Prepping of blanched peanut for milling



Blanched peanut



Packing of peanut paste by group members



Packaging of products



Obaapa Groundnut paste packaging



Obaapa neatly packaged



Chairperson showing one Obaapa product



Obaapa Groundnut Paste finished products



Samples of Finished 'Obaapa' products



Packaging



Raw groundnut to be roasted



Product packaging



Finished products packaged for sale



Packaging process by members of the group



Packaged products of all sizes for sale

THE STORY OF ATAPOR NONGTEELETAABA

In Kumbangre, within the Bolgatanga Municipal area, the Atapor Nongteeletaaba Group, a community association of 21 members (17 women and 4 men), is experiencing renewed momentum through support from the SOCO LED Grant. It was formed eight (8) years ago as a weekly susu and self-loan group; the members initially focused on mutual support to strengthen their businesses. The introduction of the LED Grant marked a turning point, enabling the group to establish a structured flour chips (pastry) production enterprise. Beyond improving their financial standing, the grant has unlocked new dimensions of growth. Beyond improving their financial standing, the grant has unlocked new dimensions of growth. **Teamwork has deepened**, with members actively sharing responsibilities toward a common goal. **Time management has improved**, enabling them to balance home life with production demands. **Skills acquisition is ongoing**, especially for those who were previously unfamiliar with food processing. The initiative has also created **employment opportunities**, engaging members who had no stable source of income. **Profits are being reinvested** to strengthen operations and expand the group's reach.



For Atapor Nongteeletaaba, the LED Grant has been a turning point, strengthening their enterprise, deepening commitment among members, and creating a reliable source of income. What began as a simple savings group has grown into a functioning business rooted in shared effort and steady ambition.

WHAT THE LED GRANT MEANS TO US



Hajaratu Fuseini

Group head of Tibom Sonjlo Group
Karaga District

“My name is Hajaratu Fuseini, and I am the group head of Tibom Sonjlo Group, a shea butter processing group based in the Karaga District. Our group has been in existence for 12 years, and we are made up of 35 members: 32 women and 3 men. For years, we supported our business through susu, pooling our little savings to keep the group running. But it was never enough. Production was low, and we couldn’t grow the way we wanted. More painful than that was how, as women, we were treated in the community. Here, it is believed that men are supposed to do everything for women. We are often left out when important decisions are being made, even those that affect us directly. When we try to speak up or ask for support, we are pushed aside. The **SOCCO Project**, through the numerous trainings and sensitisation sessions, and with the grant support under the **LED Component**, things began to change. We gained knowledge, equipment, and the push we needed to increase our production. But more importantly, we found our voice.

As a group leader, I now lead with confidence and passion. I see the change in my members; we work with unity, manage our time better, and plan with a clear purpose. We no longer feel invisible. We are contributing to our homes, building a sustainable business, and standing together with strength and dignity. The **SOCCO Project** supported our work, and it gave us room to rise.”



Salamatu Issahaku

Member, Farajama Rice Parboiling Group
Karaga District

“There was a time we had to stop working; the group couldn’t continue because we didn’t have the means. That break was painful. My focus at one point wasn’t just about the business; it was the togetherness we lost. I became lonely, and I couldn’t do anything for myself as an individual because I had no funds to start. There was no reason to gather, no activity to hold us. But when **SOCCO** came in and supported us with the needed support, everything changed. We came back stronger, working, laughing, and planning again. The support revived our rice business, and it brought back our sisterhood.”



Habiba Amidu

Group Leader, Frajema

Dagago Community, Karaga District

“Before the **SOCO Project** supported us, most of us in the group relied entirely on our husbands, and even then, the support was barely enough. Today, things are different. With the grant, our rice parboiling and milling group can produce in larger quantities. We contribute to our homes, care for our children, and support each other as women. It has brought us closer; we plan together, work together, and grow together. This has given us confidence and unity we didn’t have before.”



Bibi Andani

Member, Timtooni Group

Karaga District

“My name is Bibi Andani, and I’m a member of the Timtooni Group in Karaga District. Our group has been around for 10 years, and we are 30 in total, 28 women and 2 men, all working together in groundnut processing. Before **SOCO** came in, we were managing in our own small way. We didn’t have the right tools, and the way we packaged our products wasn’t attractive. People didn’t take our work seriously, and sales were slow.

When we received support from the **SOCO Project**, things changed. The training they gave us helped us improve how we process and package our groundnut paste. Now, our products look presentable, and people are buying more. The demand has gone up, and we feel encouraged. As women, this means a lot to us.”

WHAT'S NEXT: STAYING THE COURSE



As the LED grant disbursement continues across the regions, the focus remains clear: ensure that no effort goes to waste and that every cedi disbursed serves its intended purpose. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU), in close coordination with Zonal Offices and MMDAs, is working to maintain accuracy, transparency, and consistency throughout the process.

Each group verified, each tranche released, is backed by detailed monitoring and ongoing technical support to ensure that grants translate into real outcomes: jobs, income, dignity, and cohesion.

In the coming weeks, more beneficiary groups will receive their support, and stories of resilience and enterprise will continue to emerge from communities across the SOCO Zones. Training and follow-ups will intensify, ensuring groups are equipped not just to start, but to grow and sustain their ventures.

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