

WOMEN IN SOURCING AND ENTERPRISE (WISE) PROGRAMME – CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING NIGERIA’S CASSAVA VALUE CHAIN

A Mastercard Foundation-funded programme, co-implemented by IDH and PIND, working with selected SMEs to expand opportunities for young people in Nigeria’s cassava value chain

Across Nigeria’s agricultural landscape, cassava has significant potential to create jobs, strengthen rural livelihoods and drive value-chain development. Yet, many young people, particularly those in rural communities, face barriers to productive land, quality inputs, technical knowledge, finance and dependable markets. The Women In Sourcing and Enterprise (WISE) Programme responds to these challenges by creating practical pathways for young people, particularly young women, to participate in commercially oriented agricultural value chains.

WISE is a Mastercard Foundation-funded programme co-implemented by IDH and PIND. The programme uses an out-grower approach to create sustainable economic opportunities for young people while strengthening agricultural value chains. Within the cassava sector, PIND engages selected Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to translate the programme’s objectives into practical, commercially linked opportunities for farmers. Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited is one of the selected SMEs implementing WISE in the cassava value chain.

The programme brings together the Mastercard Foundation as funder, IDH and PIND as co-implementing partners, and selected SMEs operating within the cassava value chain. In Ebedebiri’s case, implementation also involves participating young farmers and relevant technical and service providers, including organisations supporting planting materials, training and agricultural production. Together, these relationships create a practical bridge between young farmers, agricultural production and the wider cassava industry.

Among the selected SMEs is Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited, which is implementing WISE through its cassava out-grower activities. Ebedebiri’s role is to provide a practical implementation pathway within its cassava sourcing and processing ecosystem, connecting participating young women farmers to production support, organised farming and an established processing market.

A Partnership-Driven Approach

Rather than operating as a standalone intervention owned by any one organisation, WISE adopts a collaborative model in which the Mastercard Foundation, IDH, PIND, selected SMEs and other relevant partners contribute resources, expertise, technical assistance and market linkages towards a common objective. Ebedebiri’s implementation reflects this partnership

approach by combining farmer mobilisation and support with the company's commercial need for a reliable supply of quality cassava.

Through IDH and PIND, the programme provides the coordination and implementation support needed for mobilisation, training, onboarding and development of young farmers, while selected SMEs provide the value-chain connection required to translate agricultural production into sustainable economic opportunities. At Ebedebiri, this includes land identification and mapping, land preparation, input support, extension services, farmer monitoring, harvesting and off-take coordination.

The model is particularly significant because it goes beyond supporting farmers to cultivate cassava. It seeks to establish a functional relationship between land, inputs, production, aggregation, processing and markets. Ebedebiri's planned block-farming structure – with farmers organised into manageable groups and supported by lead farmers and extension officers – is intended to make this relationship more coordinated and commercially sustainable.

This creates an ecosystem in which farmers are not working in isolation. They are organised into groups, supported with technical guidance and productive resources, and connected to a processor that intends to off-take their harvest at prevailing market prices. In this way, WISE links the economic interests of farmers and processors: farmers need reliable markets, while processors need dependable supplies of quality cassava.

WISE Programme Partners / Stakeholder Engagement]



WISE stakeholders, implementing partners and farmers during a programme engagement.

Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited: Connecting Farmers to Processing

As one of the SMEs implementing the WISE Programme, Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited plays an important role in connecting participating farmers to the industrial side of the cassava

value chain. The company began operations in 2022 and has a 240-metric-ton-per-day cassava processing capacity, designed to produce up to 60 metric tons of starch per day, although inadequate cassava supply has constrained current utilisation.

Through its out-grower model, the company is moving from a predominantly intermediary-supported and company-managed sourcing structure towards a more organised supply network. Under WISE, the company is targeting 5,000 young women farmers, with the ambition of developing up to 5,000 hectares of organised cassava production and strengthening the supply of raw material to its starch-processing operations.

Implementation involves farmer mobilisation and onboarding, land identification and digital mapping, land preparation, planting, input distribution, farmer training, field monitoring, harvesting and off-take coordination. Farmers are to be organised into blocks and groups supported by lead farmers and extension officers, while digital tools are used to strengthen farmer records, input tracking, field monitoring, feedback and reporting.

The approach is designed to provide farmers with more than access to farmland. It creates a structured pathway through which young women can develop agricultural, business and leadership skills, participate in organised production and connect their output to an established processing market. The first cohort is supported to cultivate 0.4 hectares, with the model designed to expand participating farmers towards one hectare as the programme progresses.

Farmers in Cassava Field



A young WISE-supported farmer participating in organised cassava production.

From Land to Market

One of the defining features of the programme is its emphasis on the entire production cycle. Ebedebiri's approach links the early stages of farmer onboarding and land preparation with

planting, crop management, harvesting, aggregation and eventual processing at the company's starch facility.

Participating farmers are supported through different stages of cassava production. Under WISE, the initial cohort is to receive land preparation and production support for 0.4 hectares, including access to planting materials and relevant inputs, while later phases are designed to increase land access and strengthen farmers' ability to sustain production through their own resources and commercial finance.

Field officers and programme personnel play a critical role in this process, working closely with farmers to monitor activities, provide technical guidance, document progress and ensure that programme targets are being pursued. Ebedebiri's model provides for extension support, lead farmers and demonstration plots to help farmers adopt Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and improve yield performance.

Digital tools and farmer mapping systems are also incorporated into implementation to improve farmer records, land documentation, input tracking, attendance, field-level monitoring, feedback and production reporting. Regular data collection and reporting are intended to help the project identify deviations from targets early and provide timely support to farmers.

Land Mapping / Field Officer Working with Farmer



Young People at the Centre

At the heart of the WISE Programme is the opportunity to place young women at the centre of a commercially oriented cassava value chain. The programme targets young women aged 18–35 and seeks to position them not merely as beneficiaries, but as farmers, workers, group leaders and participants in an organised agricultural enterprise.

As one of the SMEs implementing WISE, Ebedebiri is working towards the programme's target of 5,000 young women farmers while creating additional work opportunities around farm production and the wider value chain. The programme's targets include 15,000 new on-farm job opportunities and 69 off-farm opportunities across areas such as processing, logistics and other support functions, alongside structured training for participating farmers and value-chain actors.

The opportunity begins on the farm but extends far beyond it. Young women are expected to receive training in Good Agricultural Practices, climate-smart and regenerative agriculture, business and entrepreneurship, mindset orientation, leadership and group dynamics. Lead farmers will also be developed through a training-of-trainers approach so that knowledge can be cascaded through farmer groups.

Group of WISE Farmers



Young women farmers participating in organised cassava production under the WISE Programme.

Strengthening the Cassava Value Chain

The significance of the WISE Programme extends beyond individual farms. By bringing young farmers and cassava-processing SMEs closer together, the out-grower model can contribute

to a more organised, traceable and resilient cassava value chain while improving the commercial relationship between producers and processors.

For Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited, a stronger network of organised out-growers is critical to addressing one of its central business constraints: inadequate cassava supply. The company currently has an installed processing capacity of 240 metric tons of cassava per day, producing up to 60 metric tons of starch per day but has been operating below that level because sufficient raw material is not consistently available.

Within Ebedebiri's implementation of WISE, the out-grower model is designed around a two-way commercial relationship. Farmers gain access to land, inputs, technical support, organised production and a clearer route to market, while Ebedebiri gains a more structured source of cassava for processing. The company intends to off-take participating farmers' harvest at prevailing market prices, helping to provide market certainty while strengthening factory utilisation.

This two-way relationship is central to the programme's approach: farmers need markets, while processors need reliable supplies of quality cassava. By strengthening that connection, WISE can support both improved farmer livelihoods and the development of stronger local cassava-processing supply chains.

WISE seeks to strengthen that connection through practical support, organised farmer groups, technical assistance, digital monitoring and commercially linked off-take arrangements.

Cassava Harvest / Aggregation / Transportation





Beyond the Farm

The programme's impact is also reflected in the activities that surround agricultural production. Farmer training, field supervision, data collection, input distribution, land preparation, mechanisation, logistics, aggregation and processing all create opportunities for different actors within the agricultural ecosystem.

Ebedebiri's implementation also places emphasis on climate resilience and responsible production. Planned practices include minimum tillage, regenerative agriculture, use of organic inputs, avoidance of bush burning, adherence to appropriate planting calendars and weather information, and farmer training on climate-smart and environmentally responsible practices.

This means that the programme is not simply about putting more cassava in the ground. It is about building the relationships, systems and capabilities required to make cassava production more commercially sustainable. Demonstration plots, extension support, digital monitoring, group structures and business training are intended to strengthen both productivity and the capacity of young women to participate in the value chain.

Farmer Training / GAP Training Session





A Model for Inclusive Agricultural Development

WISE demonstrates how a partnership between the Mastercard Foundation, IDH, PIND, selected SMEs and farmers can create practical pathways into agricultural value chains. Ebedebiri's experience shows how one participating SME's commercial need for raw materials can be aligned with opportunities for young people to build livelihoods through agriculture.

Through the out-grower approach, young farmers are connected to land, production support, technical assistance and markets, while participating SMEs strengthen their relationship with the farming communities that supply their operations. In Ebedebiri's case, farmer organisation, lead-farmer structures, extension support, demonstration plots and digital monitoring are being used to make the relationship more coordinated.

For Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited, being a selected SME implementation partner under WISE represents an opportunity to contribute to broader transformation in the Niger Delta while building a stronger and more sustainable cassava supply network. The company's wider experience supporting farmers – including previous collaborations involving 1,000 farmers in Oghara and a 2,000-farmer cassava cultivation initiative in Otefe – provides a foundation for scaling a more structured out-grower model.

As implementation continues, the programme is positioning the cassava value chain not only as a source of agricultural production, but as an avenue for employment, enterprise development, rural economic growth and inclusive participation by young women. For Ebedebiri, the longer-term ambition is to move towards fuller utilisation of its 240-metric-ton daily cassava processing capacity, producing up to 60 metric tons of starch per day while creating a commercially sustainable farmer ecosystem.

Ebedebiri Starch Company Processing Facility



Factory gate



Weighing bridge



Front view of the processing plant



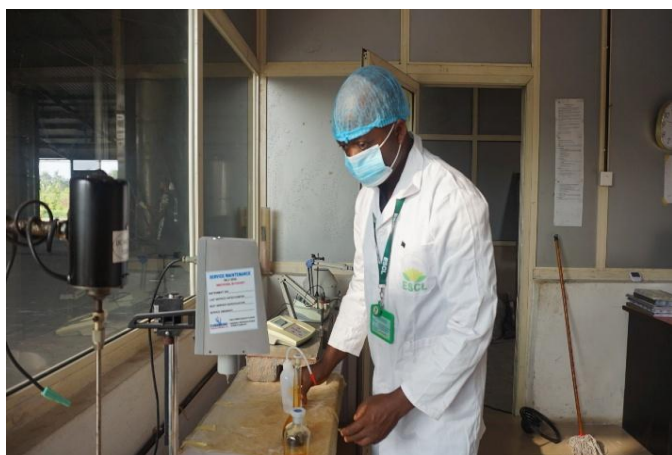
cassava receiving unit



Paddle washer unit



Rasper unit



Quality & laboratory service unit



control room



Maintenance (Boiler) Unit



Maintenance (Compressor) Unit



Hydrocyclone/Sieve Unit



Centrifuge Peeler Unit



Bagging Unit



Store Unit

WISE in Focus

Programme: WISE (Women In Sourcing and Enterprise)

Model: Cassava Out-Grower Programme

Focus: Youth participation, young women's economic opportunities, agricultural livelihoods and cassava value-chain development

Funding: Mastercard Foundation

Co-implementation: IDH and PIND

Implementation model: Selected SMEs operating across the cassava value chain

Participating SME: Ebedebiri Starch Company Limited

Ebedebiri role: Selected SME implementation partner

Geographic focus: Ethiope West LGA, Delta State and Sagbama LGA, Bayelsa State

Target: 5,000 young women farmers, with organised production scaling towards 5000 hectares

Core Approach: Connecting farmers to land, inputs, knowledge, production support, aggregation, processing and markets.

Established farms under the WISE program

