

# Rocky PATHS LEAD TO BEAUTIFUL DESTINATIONS

## *Bamba Noumina*

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Clouds of darkness disappear to give way to sunlight, efforts contributed brick by brick someday result in marvelous monuments, and finally, sometime, somewhere, rocky paths lead to beautiful destinations.

A native of Ivory Coast, Mrs Bamba Noumina's journey has not been smooth, to say the least, but is one that teaches us innumerable lessons.

### ***Ivory Coast - An advanced land housing highly educated teachers***

To understand her native briefly, we see that Ivory Coast, officially named the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, is a country located in West Africa. Ivorian economy is largely market-based and relies heavily on agriculture, with smallholder cash-crop production being dominant. Unlike traditional accounts of African countries, the Ivory Coast economy is the most advanced in sub-Saharan Africa, and one of the most developed economies in Africa as a whole.

The country is also the largest exporters of cocoa and one of the largest producers of coffee beans. Despite a relatively low literacy rate, Ivory Coast is perhaps the only country in Africa with a large presence of highly educated teachers in schools inducted directly from very high-level government ministries and other prime labor pool.

### ***She chose to stand out***

Now, coming back to the focus of this write up, Mrs Bamba, we are truly inspired by her journey. Since we broadly have an idea of the land she hails from, we may have imagined her to go with the flow and do the expected. However, what we do not know about her is that she is the CEO and Owner of ANAD-Sarl, a cashew enterprise with about 100 employees.

While the destination she has reached may delude a third person, what he may fail to see is the rocky path that she has survived to witness this day. For instance, as we learn about her childhood, we see that due to her circumstances, she had to stop school after obtaining her elementary certificate, and become a trader where she was involved in the purchase of cashew apple in Abidjan and its sale in Dabakala. In 2008, however, she got a bigger opportunity and was selected for a project launched by RONGEAD, from where she learnt about cashew processing and received the training given by INADES.

### ***Initiation of her empire – ANAD-Sarl***

It was this training that laid the foundation for her to initiate ANAD-Sarl which, back then, was a small processing unit in Dabakala with a capacity of 20 MT. With 4 semi-automatic machines and 25 employees, she started



producing kernels in small quantities. Although she did not have prior work experience, her earlier days as a trader helped give her a rough idea to handle different areas in her unit.

It was her dedication and hard work that led her unit to be selected by the United Nations project “PACIR” (Trade and Regional Integration Support Programme) in order to be trained on raw cashew nuts quality assessment as well as the different stages in raw cashew processing. The programme helped her tread further in her successful journey for it equipped her unit with two automatic huskers and others machines, thereby allowing her to increase the production capacity.

### ***Her desire to value the product served as an inspiration***

For the purpose of improving her products quality, Mrs BAMBBA received several trainings, provided by Technoserve and Olam. All these trainings provided her the skills and techniques to run her enterprise for prior to this, she did not know anyone from this business whom she could look up to. In fact, she was inspired to work in the cashew sector as she was willing to value the local product, as cashew nut is highly produced in Dabakala.

### ***There's no looking back***

Today, Mrs Bamba's unit has a capacity production of 500 MT with 100 employees, more than 70 of which are women. Different varieties of kernels are produced in ANAD-Sarl: white kernels, toasted kernels, caramelized kernels and also by-products such as cashew paste and cashew kernel juice.

From starting a small scale business where she was required in every field, today she has employees under her who carry out the work, and she is mostly required for supervision. For instance, in her processing unit, there is a production manager, a marketing manager, a store manager. Roles are shared throughout the whole chain, she only intervenes when needed.

### ***It hasn't been a cakewalk***

Witnessing a steady growth curve in her professional life from when she started 15 years back to balancing her personal life, it definitely isn't a cakewalk. We see that after her husband passed away over a decade back, she has been a single mother to her four children ever since and has fulfilled that role with excellence whilst juggling her career.

When asked about this, she says, she has reached a stage where she comes to manage the time between her processing unit and her family quite easily, as her children are more or less grown-up and they understand that she needs to work to take care of them. Besides, her daughter, Diaby Assana, who has her bachelor degree in English, plays the role of marketing director in the enterprise. The fact that she has her family member help out at the enterprise is definitely an added advantage.

### ***A driving force for the womenfolk***

Currently, she is also a member of Group SONMON, a consortium of four cashew processing companies owners in which she is the only woman. Along with this, she is the president of an NGO that helps women and makes them aware of their rights. This serves to be beneficial for it helps her offer advice and aid her women employees working at her enterprise, thereby serving as special benefits that her female workers receive. Such favors help in keeping the women in her enterprise because although labor is available in her region, she believes men are attracted towards working at gold mines.

In her view, to improve the position of women who are attracted to this industry, government and cashew institutions need to do major progress in terms of access to funding. A lot of women wish to be involved in the cashew business but are limited because they don't have the capital needed. Setting up a working capital to these women will be helpful.

### ***She believes in finding solutions***

Speaking of the USP of her products, she says their quality makes them stand out in the market. Besides, being a woman entrepreneur helps her enterprise stay unique in the generally male dominated zone.

However, when it comes to some of the challenges she faces, raw cashew nuts supply and financing top the list. But, being the logical person, she adopts a strategy to resolve both of these challenges. In order to get enough raw cashew nuts to run her factory, she negotiates with producers in the bush, for instance if the raw material is offered at fca 600/kg at the farm gate, she guarantees them she will offer fca 700/kg once the raw cashew nuts have been processed in her unit. But not all the farmers accept her deal, as a lot of them need that money for living, and cannot wait that long to get paid. She tries striking a balance and finding a way through the challenges.

### ***Big dreams, bigger efforts***

Speaking of her profession, she says she holds it very close to her heart as it is what helps her survive and she is deeply involved in her work.

In her journey further, Mrs Bamba Noumina aims to create a bigger factory and become the leader of Ivory Coast cashew processing industry. Five years down the line, instead of 500 MT of kernels, she sees herself producing 2000 MT; she also hopes for her processing unit to become a big plant with good equipment and she is working hard to reach those goals.

Her magical ingredient which has brought her so far in the journey of life is reflected in her words when she states that if you are willing to succeed, you will and nothing can come in your way. You need to set yourself a goal and take the necessary measures to achieve it!

