



Like a Guiding Lamp:

Ouedraogo Relwende Safiatou

As humans, all of us need a starting point. Without a stepping stone, we can't climb the ladder to success, without the roots, no tree can stand tall and sans any guidelines, we'd find ourselves clueless and confused. While doing things on our own provides a sense of accomplishment, having someone to guide us makes matters so much more simple. Having a constant whom we can look back to, who will not dictate but rather guide us through our goals is what we all need.

A remarkable consultant!

In the light of such perspective, it's overwhelming to learn the story of Mrs Ouedraogo Relwende Safiatou, who is owner of the consulting firm 'Hourya Conseils' which is linked to the cashew production sector. With a Master's degree in project management and a decade worth of experience, it is not hard to understand why she makes such an inspirational consultant.

A peek into the past

As we take a look into her life, we see that a native of Bam province in Burkina Faso, she arrived in Bobo Dioulasso in 1998 where she currently lives with her husband and four children while running her agency. Before becoming a consultant, she gathered all the experience she could in this field. From 2006 to 2008 she used to provide advices to women involved in local cashew processing. From 2009, she started training local producers in good agricultural practices application.

She has close ties with the cashew sector

Since her husband owns a cashew farm, and he is a producer of cashew, she has always been closely related to the field directly and indirectly, for previously, she spent a better part of her time lending a helping hand here. Besides, her work in the field has added on to her years of experience. Also, she is a graduate from the ComCashew (formerly African Cashew initiative, ACI) Master Training programme, professionalizing her expertise during 7 months in all aspects of the cashew sector.

Making the right choice

When asked on what motivated her to narrow down to the job of a consultant as a profession, Mrs Ouedraogo replies she felt the need to help the producers of her area by training them on techniques to increase their productivity. While this was the main goal, it also provided her with an opportunity to earn a living. Thus, she aimed at using her skills to socially serve the people in the cashew sector while benefitting herself and those around in the process.

She follows an organized schedule

Giving us a brief outline of her daily activities, she explains she starts work at 8 am, where she handles her urgent files following a calendar. She then goes on to take a break of one hour sometimes when her schedule permits. She also informs us that most of the time, she does not stay in her office, for a majority of her hours are spent in the field, in cashew farms specifically, in order to train the producers. Her office also serves as a networking platform to secure and ensure the supply in raw cashew nuts.

A few unsolved issues remain challenges

When asked about some of the challenges she faces in this field, she comments that she is met with the problem of



security because she has to meet her profession's demands where she is required to go to places far from the city, in bush to work with the producers. As a consultant, she knows how to make the information relay easily among the producers, but the main issue is the equipment and tools supply, which remains unsolved. Although, as a solution, she is working hard to find some local equipment suppliers, in order to make it easier for the producers who are willing to buy automatic or semi-automatic equipment.

Emerging in light in spite of the darkness

Despite the challenges that threaten to overpower like the dark clouds, she continues to be the guiding lamp and imparts her knowledge and inputs so people in the cashew sector can polish their skills and learn new techniques to maximize the rewards.

Also, initially, she did find loopholes in terms of establishing a balance between the management of her activities and her role as a mother, but she does her best to be available for her family at all times. Besides, since her husband works in cashew sector, he supports and understand her work, and her children are equally supportive. She tries to manage her time between her activities and her family, and in the morning till 8 am, she takes care of her 4 children and then goes to work.

Exceling in all roles

Balancing and doing justice to the roles of a spouse, mother and consultant is not an easy play, she knows it, but is willing to go the extra mile to excel in all roles that she is bestowed with. It is amazing to find a woman who knows that the ride is going to be bumpy but does not let the fear prevent her from embarking on the journey. A woman of class and determination, her approach to life is fantastic. Her job of a consultant is her principal profession, her livelihood, and it is what she loves to do.

Creating an informative platform

Speaking of her future plans, she says that a few years down the lane, she hopes to become a leader in cashew consulting sector. She would also like to integrate cashew processing and marketing sections. Apart from this, she envisions herself playing the role of a consultant in the entire cashew sector in order to help more people by creating a huge information platform. As the only woman consultant in this field as far as her region is concerned, she would like to see more women in the next years launching into consulting sector.

A much needed step

She also believes that access to funding and information will help improve the position of women in this industry. This is a step that needs to be taken to bring to light more women like her who are exceptionally talented and can share their valuable knowledge but are shadowed due to avoidable circumstances.

Accomplishing the difficult tasks

Lastly, when asked to reveal her success mantra and advice the other women who are interested in the cashew industry, she says with perseverance and rigorous work, most difficult tasks can also be accomplished. If you wish to become a leader, nothing can stop you from reaching your goal, all one has to do is strive towards it!

Oriented towards success

Mrs Ouedraogo's story is inspirational in the sense that as a simple woman living with her husband and four children, she is determined and success oriented. She wants to extend her knowledge to everyone around her and make sure that all can benefit from it. She is focused on the development of all and like the lamp that shines bright in the dark, she serves as the light to everyone around her – with a decade's worth knowledge and experience radiating off of her!

