



EXCELLING IN HER FIELD

Toure Diabate Massogbe

CEO of SITA, a cashew nuts processing company, Mrs TOURE DIABATE MASSOGBE of Ivory Coast is a smart and successful woman who has accomplished great heights in the cashew sector. Fluent in French and having done her Technical Diploma, she has been working in this sector for more than ten years now.

Skilled in the sector

Before initiating her company, she has worked extensively in the cashew sector, even heading a cashew based food industry for more than a decade. The work experience from the job helped her significantly when she started her venture, with the passion and keenness to develop a cash crop in the North-West of IVC.

Working towards development

The idea of creating the company struck her in 1980 when she decided to join her husband in ODIENNE. She linked with him to get involved into developing a land classified as one of the poorest regions in the country and observed that the people had tremendous potential. The rational exploitation of this potential could permit them to overcome poverty.



It's from that standpoint that she created the Cashew Planters' Cooperative of Ivory Coast (COPLACI). This cooperative was initiated in 1981 as a test plantation of 10 ha, which has now evolved to 150 ha in LOWANA, a place located at 10km of ODIENNE.

One step leads to the other

Thanks to that plantation, she was also able to start a promotional campaign for cashew culture in the entire region



of ODIENNE, with a free distribution of seeds to the producers in addition to a training on planting practices. In turn, with the help of this operation, the culture of cashew experienced an exponential development in ODIENNE. The area planted has improved from 120 hectares in 1981, to 20000+ ha in 2008.

To ensure a sustainable market for the raw cashew produced in ODIENNE, in 2000, Mrs DIABATE created her company SITA, with a processing capacity of 3000 tons per annum, which is so far the biggest private investor of the region.

SITA came as a blessing for people

She believes that with hard work and perseverance, she has gained more experience in her line of business. Employing about 1,005 people when the work is in full swing, 850 of which are women in the factory, SITA has proved to a boon for the people of this region. She informs that all of them eagerly await the payday, to reap the fruits of their hard work!

She strongly believes in equality

As the president of the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Commission within the General Confederation of Ivory Coast's Enterprises (CGECI), she constantly claims the equality of competencies between men and women. According to her, women must have the same employment opportunities as men.

She believes there is no gender distinction and she deals with men workers on the same terms as women employee. Also, she is not of the opinion that she is denied rewards when compared to the male counterparts in the sector. While she cannot say that they are all-knowing, she is sure they have made their way through this sector which has long been ruled by men.

Her take on equipping the womenfolk

As for improving the position of women, she thinks women are used to underestimating themselves, although they have an excellent management potential in addition to their rigor and flexibility to administer activities and people. According to her, the gender is not the real issue. What women need is to be confident in themselves, believe in what they do and find the appropriate support.



To ensure this, they must be willing to take some risks and engage into income-generating activities. Women must endeavor to get into the processing sector no matter what the activity is, because only processing gives more added value to the agricultural products. She also advises that women need to know the government pays attention to them and has set up some assistance services to the feminine gender, such as the PROPACOM, and some other projects.

“We must know that the CGECI within which is Women Commission, for which I am the president, works hard to put women at the top, by supporting them through their income-generating activities, and keeps making contact with the funders (such as BAD). We need to know that to be heard and listened, we need to form some economic interest groups or any other association and mutual with economic and social nature,” she further comments.

Standing out amongst other women

Speaking of her processing unit, she says it’s unique due to the fact that it is the first food industry enterprise in cashew sector, run by a woman. Their products stand out amongst others because of the diversity of the different processed kernels that they commercialize. Of course in some surfaces, one will find high priced products in comparison with their products.

Speaking about the nature of her work, she says she has a direct implication in her company’s activities. In other ways, just like the employees, she is at the office from eight in the morning and spends the whole day coordinating the different departments.



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Challenges and strategies

As for the challenges, finding resources to finance investments and run the business; management of human resources; developing plans to conquest a market share to increase sales revenue; determinate a profit margin to comfort her business' durability are some of the big tasks she encounters. To top it all, though, the lack of financing stands as the main obstacle to business developments regarding the cashew sector. In her opinion, with proper funding, they can become the leader of cashew sector in Ivory Coast and perhaps in Africa.

Besides, to overcome the challenges, she is on the constant lookout for strategies and strives for a win-win partnership contract between the State and the private sector, development partners.

Fulfilling all roles

As for striking a work life balance, she says she is happy to have the support and encouragement of her lovely family members who understand her work. She believes in complete organization of tasks to ensure she does not compromise on anything. She manages to conciliate her status as a mother and wife along with her status of CEO.

Humbled to have reached great heights

In the years to come, Mrs DIABATE sees herself as a leader in her line of business, while also putting a price on the social and humanitarian segments. In her humble opinion, she credits her profession for giving her everything she has today. A brilliant officer, she abandoned everything to get into cashew sector and today, she takes pride in being part of this sector.

Most definitely, the efforts she has been putting for years have paid off!

