

# ENHANCING TRACTOR OPERATORS' CAPACITY FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

## A trained tractor operator shares how the USAID's ADVANCE project helped him break a major barrier

Many smallholder farmers in Northern Ghana face the challenge of having limited access to quality mechanized land preparation. This is partly due to a lack of training for equipment operators. Poor land preparation activities can potentially reduce yields by 30 percent. In addressing this challenge, the USAID's ADVANCE project worked with equipment dealers, especially AFGRI, an agricultural services company formerly representing John Deere in Ghana, to train 56 people, including tractor operators and outgrower business owners (OB) across the three northern regions of Ghana on basic tractor operation and maintenance since 2016.

Abdula Alidu, 40, who works with Michael Asutani, an OB in the Yendi Municipality of the Northern Region, benefited from the tractor maintenance training. Abdula previously worked as a hired tractor operator, providing land preparation and threshing services to farmers in the municipality. Throughout his entire 17-year career, he never received any formal training in the operation and maintenance of tractors or the ripping technique until he took part in the USAID ADVANCE's project facilitated trainings in 2016 and 2017. Prior to that, he had poor skills in ploughing and service provision, maintenance schedules, and tractor handling. This resulted in frequent breakdowns of the tractors and increased servicing costs. After ploughing 50 acres of land, Abdula would spend GHS 3,000 (USD 625) on either maintenance or repairs.



Abdula Alidu, a USAID's ADVANCE project trained tractor operator with Mic Mac Enterprise, an outgrower business in the Yendi Municipality of the Northern Region  
(Photo credit : Joseph Kansaki, agricultural production officer)

After receiving these tractor management trainings, Abdula gained a deep knowledge, including techniques for climbing a tractor, routine checking of all fittings, dashboard readings and interpretation, determination of servicing schedule, and ripping and ploughing to avoid frequent breakdown of the parts. As a result, he successfully used a John Deere tractor that he received as grant from Michael Asitani for more than a year without any broken parts. That meant he also saved the GHS 3,000 he would have spent on maintenance or repairs for every 50 acres ploughed. Abdula adheres to routine tractor maintenance, thereby minimizing frequent part breakdowns and costs of maintenance. He provides quality ploughing services to smallholder farmers, and this has won him the admiration of farmers, outgrower business owners, and other tractor operators in the Yendi Municipality and beyond.

“Now, due to the knowledge gained on tractor operation, there is reduced cost of maintenance. I invest the money I would have spent on repairs on other beneficial things. I am motivated to continue with the

practice because my [fellow] operators are always curious to how I kept the tractor in that good condition. I now literally sleep with the tractor for good monitoring,” Abdula said.

In early 2018, Abdula trained nine other tractor operators who had not received prior project’s training. This will enable them to also improve upon their performance. He monitors and provides technical backstopping to the trained operators in case of any challenges. His vision is to continue to be an example to others. “The training has been beneficial,” Abdula said. “I want to impart the knowledge to more operators on my own in the coming years.”