



## The Rise of Eco-Friendly Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is a creative activity of an individual with an innovative idea for self-employment and income generation. An entrepreneur creates his own establishment with profit motive optimising the use of unexploited resources and helps the economy become self-sufficient. Young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to come up with the determination to do something on their own and contribute to the national income. The encouragement could be provided by the structural changes in the financial institutions and government policies supporting entrepreneurship.

World has seen numerous entrepreneurs inspiring individuals with their innovative activities. For instance, Henry Ford of Ford Motor Company, Bill Gates of Microsoft, Anita Roddick of Body Shop, are popularly known names in the long list of entrepreneurs. On the basis of their area of business and activity, entrepreneurs are termed as social entrepreneurs, business entrepreneurs and so on. Within the category of social entrepreneurs, if their business activity relates in preserving the environment, they are termed as eco-friendly entrepreneurs or to be specific 'ecopreneurs'. Ecopreneurs, generally focus on developing green business with minimum or no effect on the environment.

Green business has emerged as the profitable branch of business world. Almost every company across the world is emphasising on the green way of doing business to be sustainable in the long run. The green business promoted by entrepreneurs is the need of the hour for economic development and environment conservation of the globe. It is far more essential for the developing countries like Nigeria, where ecology provides the bread and butter of the people living.

In Ghana, forests are the main source of timber and income generation for villagers. Over the time, the expansion of the land for agriculture of its main crop cocoa is fast reducing the forest reserves. Besides agriculture expansion, excessive logging of timber from forest is also the reason for the deforestation in the country. Timber being the nation's 4<sup>th</sup> largest industry, provides employment and also encourages entrepreneurship thus contributing to the economy. There are more number of private timber processing firms in the country encouraging self-employment in the sector. Even the government of the country encourages and supports entrepreneurship activities providing opportunities in various sectors.

On the other hand, illegal timber logging has become a cause of concern. The increasing demand for timber from developed countries has heightened illegal timber logging in the country posing danger to the forests. The government and forest commission of the country are taking measures to curb illegal logging by the ban of raw logs export, allowing only processed and certified timber for exports, timber logging only from sustainable managed forests, etc. Besides these measures, the government even entered into an agreement with the importing countries to buy timber from sustainable sources only banning illegal timber entering their countries. Such measures encourage entrepreneurial activities and help in raising the standards of their livelihood.

One such entrepreneur providing income and encouraging environment protection is Wellington Baiden (Baiden) of Ghana. Baiden with his firm Portal Ltd., developed a unique model including timber processing, growing non-timber forestry products such as ylang-ylang, nut-meg, patchouli, etc., and social foundation of forest research and development. Baiden follows a philosophy of logging timber from the sustainable tree plantation programme and plants a tree in replacement. With his initiatives, Baiden provides employment to about 100 people including farm workers and other out-grower farmers, who grow plants in their lands taking the seeds and technical assistance from Portal's people.

Baiden has sustainable expansion and diversification plans with his company in the long run. He plans to expand his non-timber products in other areas and increase his tree plantation programme. Baiden also plans to diversify into soap and candle-making providing employment to more and more villagers. Through his activities and plans, Baiden is trying to establish that profit can be earned by investing in trees and being environment-friendly with a little patience invested. However, the question to be answered is how far would the Baiden model be successful in providing enough income to people and convince them to stop cutting trees?

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