

# Enhancing human security through developing local capacity for holistic community-based conflict prevention in Northern Ghana



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Ghana

**Duration:** June 2009 to August 2013

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNICEF; WFP; FAO; UNIDO; UNU

**Other Implementing Partners:** National Ministries, academic institutions, NGOs, civil society organizations

**Budget:** \$3,052,834.40

**Key Words:** Governance; post-conflict peacebuilding; livelihoods; health; food security; entrepreneurship; agricultural development

## BACKGROUND

As violent conflict consumed many of its neighbours, Ghana has been considered one of the most stable countries in West Africa. However, in the remote northern regions of the country, conflict had continuously plagued vulnerable rural communities for over 20 years. Over the past two decades, the regions of Bawku, Wa and Yendi in northern Ghana have experienced over 23 different conflicts, often emanating from power struggles over local chieftaincies. These conflicts forced many families from their homes and severely destroyed the sense of social cohesion in the region. Moreover, they significantly hampered development opportunities,

disrupted agricultural production and harvesting processes, and restricted access to essential social services driving people deeper into poverty and hunger. Consequently, Ghana's northern region has not been able to benefit from the social and economic development enjoyed in southern part of the country. Vulnerable people and communities in the north were in need of comprehensive and multi-sectoral assistance to address the multiple insecurities faced in their daily lives, to rebuild infrastructure and to empower communities to prevent a resurgence of violent conflict.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To overcome threats to human security in northern Ghana, the project implemented the following five interrelated components: (i) capacity development of local institutions and civil society in democratic governance; (ii) institutionalization of mechanisms for conflict prevention and peace consolidation; (iii)

improvement in productivity and income generating capacities through development of micro, small and medium enterprises; (iv) strengthening of agricultural practices and food security; and (v) the promotion and mainstreaming of human security in Ghana's development context.

### BENEFICIARIES

The project reached more than 52,000 people in the three northern regions of Bawku, Wa and Yendi. Community members ranging from traditional chiefs to vulnerable women directly benefitted from the project through participating in capacity building

activities to acquire a diverse range of necessary skills including conflict mediation and business management skills. The project also engaged staff of local government institutions and NGOs through activities to promote improved governance.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Women from different warring factions were brought together for training on income generation and business development to learn together and encourage collaboration in these activities. In total, 15 women's groups, each group composed of approximately 20 to 30 members, received support to improve milling, agro-processing and business skills, leading to a positive impact on the livelihoods of more than 2,000 households in the region. Furthermore, approximately 500 women and men received micro-finance assistance to expand their business.

(ii) Additionally, inter-agency support to improve the health and nutrition of affected communities in the targeted regions garnered positive multiplier effects. More than 200 malnourished children under 5 years of age received vital assistance through UNICEF's Community Management of Acute Malnutrition programme while WFP's Supplementary Feeding Programme prevented a relapse into malnutrition by providing supplementary feeding rations to children's families. These combined efforts supported nearly 7,500 malnourished children, pregnant and lactating

women. At the same time, staff of health service centres were trained and equipped to provide quality care to parents and children.

(iii) An important achievement that underpins the entire project was activities to foster social cohesion and peacebuilding. For example, after participating in sensitization activities, blacksmiths from conflict-prone regions took the initiative to mobilize their peers and engage in dialogue with Municipal Chief Executive and Police Commanders on ways to collaborate with the security sector institutions to prevent small arms proliferation. The project also collaborated with the National Youth Authority to organize a youth festival to build social cohesion and trust among warring factions. Noted as one of the most successful cultural events in the recent times by the Regional Director of the National Youth Authority as well as the participants, the event encouraged interactions between various youth groups as well as traditional authorities, using their rich cultural heritage to foster unity and peaceful coexistence.

## LESSONS LEARNED

A key factor that contributed to the successful delivery and sustainability of the project was the strategic engagement with local stakeholders throughout the process and a focus on building the capacity of local institutions through active participation in implementing the project's activities. Consequently, based on consultations with local government and community leaders, national policies and programmes were adapted to reflect the local needs and capacities. Meanwhile, in responding to common insecurities identified at the local level, a multidisciplinary approach which integrated

economic, nutrition, public safety and governance activities was developed. Furthermore, the active participation of communities in identifying and surmounting their shared challenges created spaces for dialogue and conflict prevention. Subsequently, through a local-level analysis, conflict prevention activities were integrated into local development plans, thereby further ensuring that future development gains would not be undermined by unresolved local tensions and recurrent episodes of violent conflict.