



**United Nations Trust Fund
for Human Security**

Ghana

Fostering Reforestation, Environmental Sustainability, and Tourism: Accelerating the SDGs in the Okyeman Area

Background information

Forests play a crucial role in the sustainable development of Ghana, contributing to livelihoods, employment, tourism, and foreign exchange earnings. Over the past decade, however, the country has experienced substantial rates of deforestation and forest degradation, attributable to illicit timber logging, mining activities, unsustainable agricultural practices, and precarious land tenure policies. The loss of forest cover and biodiversity poses multidimensional challenges for the large farming community in Eastern Ghana, reliant on fertile soils for their livelihoods, food production, and dietary diversity. The expansion of mining activities has contributed to mercury poisoning, posing significant health threats to the local communities, especially children. Addressing the interconnected drivers and consequences of deforestation and illicit resource exploitation demands comprehensive and integrated strategies, pinpointing entry points to mitigate the threats to multiple dimensions of human security through collaborative strategies that advance the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.

Goals and objectives

The overall goal of the programme is to strengthen local systems through the human security approach to address critical gaps in sustainable environmental governance, livelihood diversification, and healthcare in Akyem Abuakwa. To this end, the specific objectives are to: (i) strengthen community-led environmental governance, natural resource management, and ecotourism; (ii) improve food productivity, optimal nutrition, and access to quality inclusive education; and (iii) increase access to quality and affordable public health services.



DURATION

January 2021 – February 2025



UN IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNEP, UNV



OTHER KEY PARTNERS

Okyeman Environment Foundation (OEF), traditional authorities, Volunteer Organizations in Ghana, Forestry Commission of Ghana, Environmental Protection Agency of Ghana, Ghana Cocoa Board, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Climate Innovations Centre, Ghana Alliance for Clean Cookstoves & Fuels, A Rocha Ghana, Mondelez International, Newmont Mining Firm, Cocoa & Forest Initiative, and Ministries of Environment, Science, Technology & Innovation; Lands & Natural Resources; Health; Local Government & Rural Development; Finance; and Tourism, Arts & Culture.



BENEFICIARIES

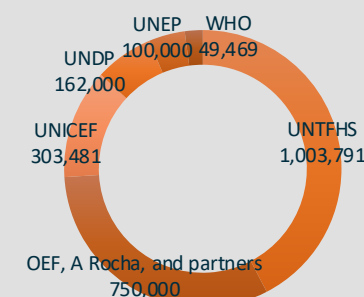
1,328,304



TOTAL BUDGET

US\$ 2,368,741

POOLING OF RESOURCES



Beneficiaries

Harnessing a whole-of-society approach, the programme will utilize participatory community-based approaches to engage and build the capacities of traditional structures and leaders, civil society, the private sector, and national and subnational government authorities to implement locally tailored solutions. In total, the programme benefits 1,328,304 people in 100 communities of the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Applying the Human Security approach

Complex challenges to sustainable development, such as forest degradation and illicit resource exploitation, stem from interconnected and multidimensional root causes shaped by a combination of factors and diverse stakeholders. As such, adopting comprehensive, participatory, and localized strategies is imperative to effectively promote lasting solutions to environmental, economic, health, community, and food insecurities in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

The programme strengthens natural resource management through multistakeholder partnerships, revitalizing existing groups and establishing governance structures like Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs). These structures bring together farmers, local chiefs, government representatives, opinion leaders, private sector actors, and landowners to co-manage resources, enforce accountability, provide training in sustainable agroforestry, raise awareness, and ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

Breaking the cycle of poverty and resource exploitation also demands locally tailored livelihood diversification. By supporting CREMAs, initiating seedling enterprises, expanding waste recovery initiatives, and promoting ecotourism, the programme empowers communities economically while creating incentives to conserve the environment. Complementary outreach on the health impacts of poor resource management equips individuals to make informed choices, adopt sustainable behaviors, and take ownership of environmental protection.

To sustain these community-driven changes, the programme builds the capacities of key stakeholders in forestry management, informs policy reforms such as chemical bans, and supports local governance initiatives like the Okyeman Environment Foundation (OEF). Together, these actions enhance human security, foster environmentally responsible economic opportunities, and safeguard natural resources for current and future generations.

Achievements

- Three new CREMAs were successfully established, giving communities formal authority to manage forests and biodiversity. Over 500 members actively participated in decision-making processes, developing conservation plans and livelihood strategies that reflect local priorities. These initiatives strengthened accountability, improved natural resource management, and fostered a culture of environmental responsibility.
- Using a detailed human security and community profile, targeted interventions were implemented to address food insecurity and economic vulnerability. More than 2,000 households benefited from sustainable farming practices, nutrition support, and adaptive strategies that reduced their exposure to climate and environmental shocks. This improved access to food, diversified diets, and reinforced community resilience.
- The programme reached schools and communities through awareness campaigns and practical training, linking climate adaptation, public health, and sustainable resource use. Communities adopted new practices that reduced environmental health risks and promoted well-being, demonstrating measurable improvements in nutrition, hygiene, and environmental awareness across the Okyeman area.



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