



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 – December 2024



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, New mont 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.

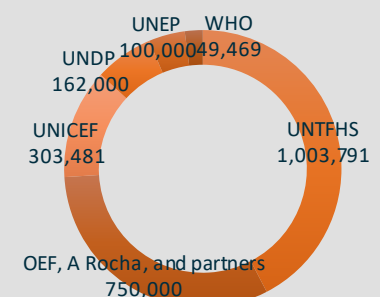


BENEFICIARIES
1,328,304



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.

To safeguard natural resources and promote sustainable resource management, the programme promotes multistakeholder partnerships focused on revitalizing existing resource management groups and establishing governance structures such as Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA). These structures, comprising farmers, local chiefs, government representatives, opinion leaders, private sector stakeholders, and landowners, collaborate to co-manage natural resources. They oversee and strengthen accountability mechanisms, have the authority to address violations, provide capacity-building on best agroforestry practices, raise awareness of sustainable practices, and empower local actors for equitable distribution of benefits.

Breaking the cycle of poverty and illicit resource exploitation requires a wide-ranging approach to sustainable livelihood diversification based on the needs, capacities, and assets available at the local level. Through establishing the CREMA and initiating seeding enterprises, and expanding waste recovery initiatives and ecotourism, the programme economically empowers communities while creating financial incentives to conserve the environment. In addition, to address illegal activities, the programme raises awareness and mobilizes the community through training on the health consequences of poor resource management. Through this educational outreach, the initiative empowers individuals to take ownership of their environment, make informed decisions to protect it, and adopt behaviors that will positively impact their health.

To sustain community-driven changes, the programme builds the capacities of key stakeholders in forestry management, informs chemical ban policy reforms, and supports existing local governance initiatives such as the Okyeman Environment Foundation (OEF). These mutually reinforcing actions create an environment in which the improved management of natural resources contributes to enhancing the human security of vulnerable communities and new economic opportunities are developed in harmony with nature to preserve and protect this resource for present and future generations.



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