

Local communities restoring degraded forests.

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A volunteer preparing a nursery.

@Praise Nutakor/ UNDP Ghana

The FOREST Okyeman project is a transformative initiative that is sowing the seeds of change in Akyem Abuakwa. Around 1.3 billion people globally are dependent on forests for their livelihood according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, yet forests are being cut down. To

Sustainability, and Tourism in the Okyeman " **(FOREST Okyeman)** using human security approach. The project is seeking to address critical gaps in the environment, health, and education sectors in the Okyeman.

In Akyem Abuakwa, where the detrimental effects of illegal mining, logging, and poor agricultural practices have taken a toll on nature, the FOREST Okyeman project emerges as a significant force for positive change. By mobilizing local communities, the project focuses on the restoration of degraded lands through the establishment of community nursery enterprises, specifically geared towards cultivating fast-growing economic tree species. This approach not only contributes to reforestation efforts but also instills a sense of ownership among the community members.

“Watching our forests come back to life through agroforestry has given us hope. Our community used to suffer from land damage, but now we foresee a future of healthy lands and improved lives because of the project’s intervention”, noted Albert Nti, a volunteer helping to restore the degraded landscape.



Albert Nti, a volunteer helping to restore the degraded landscape.

In 2023, twenty-six (26) community nursery enterprises were set up across Okyeman with over 300 community nursery volunteers involved. The idea of communities working together for nature blossomed. However, the journey from nurseries to planting seedlings in the forest was challenging.

“Working on community nursery enterprises was a challenge for us because we are new to raising and nurturing economic tree seedlings. But gradually our capacity was built with directions from the Forest Service Division (FSD) and the technical institutions”, Grace recounts.



Grace a volunteer helping to restore degraded forests in Akyem Abuakwa

@Louisa Antwi/ UNDPGhana

From unpredictable weather to dealing with limited resources, each planting session brought new challenges. Despite this, the volunteers stuck together and showed strength in facing obstacles.

“This journey has shown us how connected our environment is to our well-being. Challenges may have slowed us down, but every tree planted is a



Ghana

in the soil, a symbol of teamwork and unwavering effort emerged. The FOREST Okyeman project isn't just about helping the environment—it is about inspiring community-driven change, where people stand strong together, fostering hope for the future.

The stories of growth and resilience show how overcoming challenges creates opportunities. As the activities under the project continue, it sets an example of positive change, where communities find strength together, and nurture hope for the next generations.