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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



North Gonja District Assembly RING Project Journal

Summary of Efforts in Partnership with the Resiliency in Northern Ghana Project

Since 2015, the USAID-funded Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Project has worked in partnership with North Gonja District to achieve a number of notable outcomes in the areas of agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, good governance, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), all in an effort to sustainably reduce poverty and malnutrition throughout the district. The following pages contain a summary of those efforts, including key results achieved, successful areas of operations, lessons learned during implementation, and areas that the district has identified for continuation after the project closes in September 2019.

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Resiliency in Northern
Ghana (RING) Project



Glossary of Terms

AEA	Agriculture Extension Agent
APC	Anemia Prevention and Control
CAP	Community Action Plan
CHPS	Community-based Health Planning Services
CIYCF	Community-based Infant and Young Child Feeding
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition
CU5	Children Under Five
DHA	District Health Administration
DHMT	District Health Management Team
EHA	Environmental Health Assistant
ENA	Essential Nutrition Actions
FTF	Feed the Future
GHS	Ghana Health Services
GOG	Government of Ghana
IGF	Internally Generated Funds
LEAP	Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assembly
MOGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MTDP	Medium Term Development Plan
MTMSG	Mother to Mother Support Group
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NRCC	Northern Regional Coordinating Council
NRHD	Northern Regional Health Directorate
ODF	Open Defecation Free
OFSP	Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheet
QI	Quality Improvement
RAD	Regional Agriculture Department
RDCD	Regional Department for Community Development
RDSW	Regional Department of Social Welfare
REHSU	Regional Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit
RING	Resiliency in Northern Ghana
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Associations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

Front Cover Photo: on the job training in commodity management in a district health facility

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Overview of the RING Project

The Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) was a five-year integrated partnership under the Feed the Future (FTF) Initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), designed to contribute to the Government of Ghana's (GOG) efforts to sustainably reduce poverty and malnutrition. The project goal was to improve the livelihoods and nutritional status of vulnerable households in targeted communities in seventeen districts in northern Ghana. Consistent with USAID Local Solutions principles of direct support to host governments, RING was implemented through a collaborative approach with District Assemblies and seven departments of the Northern Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC), along with technical assistance from Global Communities. RING was designed to collectively contribute to the FTF goals of **decreasing stunting, wasting, underweight & anemia by 20% among women and children under five (CU5) and also increase incomes of at least 80% of target households.**

District Overview & RING Partnership History

North Gonja is one of the 17 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA) that partnered with the RING project. The district comprises mainly rural communities, with large swaths of arable land. The average household size throughout the district is 6 (roughly 23.1% lower than the regional average of 7.8¹) and there is a total population of approximately 50,000 people². People in this district typically engage in agriculture as their main source of income, with the primary crops being cassava, yam, groundnut, cowpea, and maize. The district has a poverty prevalence of 16.4%, with an average daily per capita expenditure of USD 3.63.

Since 2015, the district partnered with the RING project to reach over 6,900 people with a number of nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods, good governance, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions. These interventions were based at the household, community, and sub-district level, and all worked



Cumulative Project Results

1,733

Communities Reached

123,209

Individuals Directly Benefitting

**GHS 108.6M/
US\$ 29.9M**

RING Direct Funding Support Allocated to 17 Partnering MMDAs and the NRCC

North Gonja Life of Project Results

72

Communities Reached

6,949

Individuals Directly Benefitting

**GHS 3.98M/
US\$ 1.1M**

RING Direct Funding Support Allocated to North Gonja District Assembly

¹Ghana National Census, 2012

²North Gonja District Medium Term Development Plan (2014 – 2017)

cohesively toward reducing poverty and malnutrition in the most vulnerable households. The following pages summarize efforts under the project to date, along with qualitative analysis on lessons learned, challenges experienced and approaches used to overcome them, as well as next steps as the district looks toward the future and maintaining some of the positive outcomes realized during project partnership.

Community & Household Selection Strategy

Communities and households benefitting from the RING Project were selected using a straightforward approach that included an exhaustive review of existing data at the Assembly on a number of areas, including:

- Potable water coverage;
- Household latrine coverage;
- Prevalence of infectious diseases among children under five (malaria, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infection);
- Accessibility to healthcare;
- Market accessibility; and
- Agriculture extension services received.

Once all data points had been included, communities were ranked according to how dire the situation was. For example, on a five-point scale, a community that showed 33% of their CU5s had suffered from malaria in the last six months, compared to a community where only 11% of children had reported cases, the first community would have received more points. All data categories were considered for evaluation, but only those with complete data sets for all the communities in the district were included. This meant that all communities had an equal opportunity for inclusion in the project. However, due to funding limitations, a cap had to be placed on the number of communities to ensure that targeted households would adequately benefit from numerous interventions, as outlined in the strategic layering section below.

Once communities had been selected, household selection began. Per the project specifications, each household must have at least one woman of reproductive age (15-49) and one child under five, as these two groups were the most vulnerable to the health issues the project intended to reduce (anemia, stunting, wasting, and underweight). Per the community's standards, the households also had to be considered especially vulnerable (i.e. unable to provide three square meals a day, had limited access to land or farming inputs, state of the house structure was in poor condition, children were unable to attend school, etc.). Households were most often proposed by a group of trained community members or representatives, then Assembly staff engaged with the community and traditional authorities before validating the list of proposed households. Once this process was finalized, those households were the intended project beneficiaries over the next five years.

Strategic Layering of Interventions

Poverty and malnutrition are complex topics and require a multi-faceted approach to address them at their root causes. As such, under RING, interventions were delivered by the Assembly at the individual, household, community, and sub-district level, looking at various aspects, including:

- Expansion of credit and savings access in rural households;
- Diversification of income streams;
- Accessibility and utilization of diverse foods;
- Improving key nutrition-behaviors, especially among women and young children;
- Improving key sanitation behaviors, especially among women and young children;

- Empowering local government institutions to identify and address the needs of the community (particularly those related to nutrition and livelihoods);
- Supporting communities through the process of identifying and addressing nutrition and livelihoods needs, as well as strengthening the communication channels between them and their local government offices; and
- Strengthening the capacity of the Assembly to monitor and evaluate development planning efforts.

With these broad objectives in mind, households and communities benefitting directly from RING efforts would, over time, receive multiple interventions from various technical areas, including agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, WASH and good governance. By 2017, RING and the Assembly had identified the Village Savings and Loans Association, or VSLA, as a promising intervention upon which other activities could be appropriately layered. This was because VSLAs provided members with an option to take out a small loan to address an emergency need, rather than selling off an expensive asset, such as a small ruminant or several fowls. From there, other interventions, such as the Mother to Mother Support Groups (MTMSG), were added, enabling families, particularly women, the additional funds needed to purchase more nutritious foods or address healthcare

needs in a timely manner, in line with best practices promoted during semi-weekly group sessions. This approach followed principles of strategic layering of interventions, ensuring that all direct beneficiaries were engaged in a number of complementary efforts that would build more resilient households. In North Gonja District Assembly, senior leadership took the strategic decision to layer MTMSGs and OFSP cultivation groups onto existing VSLAs, resulting in more effective community engagement and coordination of outreach efforts among the district implementation team.

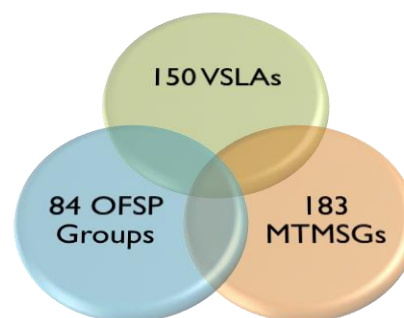


Figure 1 Summary of Strategic Layering of Interventions within North Gonja District

Approach to Scaling Up Key Interventions

Throughout the course of implementation, district leadership and the RING technical team noted that several interventions had the potential to greatly benefit the population if they could be scaled up to cover all or the majority of partnering households. These were activities that the communities had shown high demand for, that the Assembly technical team had managed quite well over time, that fell in line with GOG priority areas related to the intervention, and had strong track records of addressing project goals of reducing poverty and malnutrition. VSLA was one such intervention, along with MTMSGs, the cultivation of orange fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP) and a reduction in open defecation via the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) activity.

Recognizing that to scale up activities effectively, the Assembly may require additional human resource support, leadership engaged with Global Communities RING on the matter, ultimately accepting assistance from several short-term consultants tasked with key areas in the implementation of CLTS, and VSLA and MTMSG formation and training. In doing so, all communities received VSLA support, 100% of those VSLAs were reached with MTMSG and 56% cultivated OFSP.

Gender Integration Strategy

In rural northern Ghana, gender norms are quite rigid, with men generally expected to care for larger expenses related to the household, and women required to support the everyday family life, including caring for the children and feeding the family. Given RING's focus on improving malnutrition conditions

within rural families, reaching women was a central priority. Through agriculture and livelihood activities, RING worked to increase the income accessibility of nutritious foods for the households. Nutrition activities achieved these by teaching women how to provide nutritious meals and access necessary health care services. Given that women are viewed as primarily responsible for the sanitation of the home (traditionally fetching water, cleaning and bathing the children), they were a key target for WASH interventions.

To further hone the impact of interventions toward gender-sensitive areas, RING activities utilized three key indicators within the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index, or the WEAI, to ensure that critical aspects were fully considered before the roll out of any intervention. These indicators included:

- Reducing women's time burden;
- Expanding women's social cohesion; and
- Increasing women's control over household assets and income.

In each activity the Assembly promoted under the RING Project, these areas were considered before they were introduced to communities. In some cases, during programmatic evaluations, original approaches were altered. For instance, cultivation of dry season leafy green vegetable gardens was eventually paired with manual and motorized water pumps as hauling water from a nearby source and manually watering the gardens proved to be quite cumbersome for women at times. Also, many community interventions, such as the Mother to Mother Support Group (MTMSG) are operated through small groups. By participating in the MTMSGs and VSLAs, for instance, women form closer bonds with one another, expanding their networks and increasing social resiliency. A pilot of the Father to Father Support Group (FTFSG) activity was also introduced to strengthen the men's role in the health and nutrition of the family as primary decision-makers and influencers. And lastly, small ruminants targeted women, but with strong community sensitizations involving the husbands explaining the benefits for the household and the men's their role to supporting their wives with the intervention.



Figure 2 Gender stakeholders undertaking a power mapping exercise to support lobbying efforts to receive gender funding

Activity Planning & Reporting

The following pages include a number of interventions summarized to provide a big picture idea of what the Assembly was able to accomplish under its partnership with the RING Project. As mentioned above, the interventions focused on a number of levels for beneficiaries, including individuals, households, communities, and larger geographic areas, such as sub-districts or Area Councils.

Each activity was selected by the Assembly through a number of methods, including: analysis of GOG priority areas; utilization of data informing the most appropriate intervention based on the needs of the populace; and solicitation of community feedback on intervention preferences. USAID also provided an initial list of evidence-based interventions that the agency had supported implementation of globally and in Ghana, with positive results in the various thematic areas. The Assembly utilized this foundational list to identify a number of key interventions that fell in line with government and community priorities, as well as the needs of the people based on data in health and nutrition, sanitation, agriculture, and economic growth. Several times throughout the life of the RING Project, a number of MMDA and

regional officials joined with Global Communities and USAID to conduct reviews of the existing menu of activities, eliminating those that had proven less effective during implementation, adjusting those with promise but facing challenges, and including new activities based on the changing local and national priorities. As a result, each year, the Assembly produced an action plan and budget which it successfully implemented over a 9 to 12-month period. In [Annex A](#), an example of the final iteration of the evidence-based activity menu can be found.

Throughout implementation, the Assembly was required to account for the funds spent as well as the programmatic outcomes of the interventions. This was done via quarterly and monthly liquidation and reconciliation reports, as well as semi-annual, then quarterly programmatic reports. Each round of reporting fell in line with the GOG requirements for financial and programmatic reporting and was required by USAID in order for the Assembly to continue to receive funds for implementation.

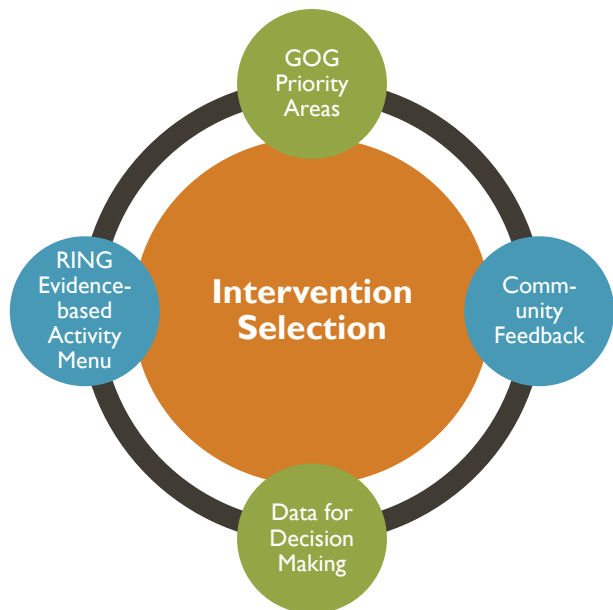


Figure 3 Priority areas for the Assembly during selection of interventions implemented via the RING Project

Activities Implemented under RING Partnership

The following pages contain high level summaries of efforts undertaken by the district during the partnership with the USAID RING Project in agriculture & livelihoods, nutrition, WASH, and good governance. They contain the objectives of each intervention, how they were carried out, the officers involved in supporting those initiatives, the role of community members, and lessons learned throughout the process. In many cases, the Assembly has identified key areas of the interventions that it wishes to continue beyond the life of the project and those activities have been identified in the [Sustainability Strategy](#), which is included at the end of this document.

Agriculture & Livelihoods Activity Overviews

Agriculture and Livelihoods interventions in the North Gonja District Assembly were geared towards strengthening the resiliency of households against social, environmental and economic shocks that disrupt the livelihoods of rural households. The Assembly strengthened women's capacity in crop diversification and alternative livelihoods opportunities. The prioritized crops women have been trained and coached on include soybeans, orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), dry season leafy green vegetable (LGV) cultivation through gravity-fed drip irrigation, each of which fills a nutritional void found in carbohydrate-based staple crops, and complements customary agriculture efforts of northern Ghanaian women. The Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), the small ruminant and poultry management interventions and shea nut collection with market linkages were also identified as alternative livelihoods interventions and extended to beneficiaries as part of building the resiliency of vulnerable households. VSLAs, which have enabled women to mobilize savings, have also provided access to credit to vulnerable women, enabling them to address pressing health and nutritional needs of their families, expand educational opportunities for their children, and engage in lucrative Income Generating Activities (IGAs). The following pages detail some of the outcomes of these efforts within the Assembly over the LOP.

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA)

Village Savings and Loans Association Activity Summary

Training: upon formation, each group was trained in the following areas: financial literacy, basic business management and entrepreneurial skills, VSLA mechanics, group dynamics, and conflict resolution. Upon completion of these trainings (which last between 2-4 days and were conducted at the community level), the women begin saving on a weekly basis.

Follow-Up Support: depending on the groups' progress, district facilitators met with a group over the course of a calendar year between 20-24 times; immediately following training and early in the group's life cycle, support was more intense – over time, the dependence on the facilitator waned and the group was able to meet on their own. Key events, such as loan taking, loan repayment, and share outs, were times when new groups needed more hands-on support.

Phase-Out Strategy: each group received monitoring support from facilitators over at least a two-year period, with some extending into three years, depending on the need. The ultimate goal is for each group to be able to carry out major milestones on their own, though the district still needs to meet with them periodically to pull savings and loans data for record keeping purposes.

Led by the North Gonja District Department of Community Development, the District began Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) activity implementation in 2015. Since then, the 150 VSLAs formed across the 93 communities have operated consistently and, as a result, the 4368 members now have access to savings opportunities and credit to meet their pressing household food and income needs, or address economic shocks as they arise. To support activity implementation, the district led the formation of the groups and subsequent trainings, before the groups began meeting on a regular basis to save their own money, issue and repay loans, and conduct annual share out activities when members receive the full amount of money they had saved during the year. The district team also collects relevant savings and loans data for uploading into the global VSLA database, SAVIX (Savings Information Exchange platform).

During monitoring of the groups, the team proactively responds to challenges faced by the members. Given the RING Project's deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable households, many members struggle with literacy and numeracy, making record keeping quite difficult at times. Through consistent coaching, however, these issues have largely been addressed, though sporadic support is still required. The table below provides a year by year performance summary for North Gonja District's VSLAs supported through the RING Project.

Table 1: Performance of District VSLA Efforts (in Ghana Cedis)

Year	# of Comm' ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (loan interest + social fund)	Share Out Figures		
							Amount	# of Groups	# of Members
2019	5	11	283	44080	4004	46992	N/A	N/A	N/A
2018	2	6	171	28916	7000	29360	87216	10	341
2017	63	89	2526	571217	59529	574836	1940974	89	2526
2016	19	42	1208	359171	229341	359617	623339	60	1657
2015	4	6	180	208086	187100	206086	45000	6	180
Total	93	150	4368	1211470	486974	1216891	2696529	165	4704

Over the life of the RING project, the 150 groups formed saved a cumulative total of GHS 1.2M and loaned over GHS 486,974, with an average of GHS 279 in total assets released to each member over the life of the project. These savings and loans often went to address healthcare needs for the family, provided funds for school fees, or gave women the necessary capital to set up a small business to earn additional income. Additionally, all VSLAs have been savings consistently due to the regular visits made by the district implementation team and the quality of financial literacy education provided. General performance analysis of these VSLAs indicates that all groups meet an acceptable health determination

(i.e. high meeting attendance rates, excellent knowledge of saving amounts by members, and generally good enforcement of VSLA rules) and show promising signs for sustainability).

One key lesson learned during VSLA implementation was that implementation requires working with all the structures at the community level, including chiefs, opinion leaders, and community volunteers. When community participatory action learning tools are employed during community mobilization and sensitization, formation of functional VSLA groups becomes a collective responsibility of the community and key stakeholders and not the district team that introduced the concept to them.

One key step taken by the district to ensure the sustainability of VSLA implementation is to embark upon integrated community monitoring. This ensures that all activities implemented in these communities are monitored as resources will be put into judicious use. As field officers undertake community level visits, they will be encouraged by their Head of Department to follow up on a number of activities, such as Mother to Mother Support Group progress and Community Led Total Sanitation implementation, while also collecting the VSLA data. Upon return to the Assembly, this information would be shared with the appropriate district technical department for further action.

Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato Cultivation

Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato Activity Summary

Training: women (along with their husbands) received basic training on land preparation (ridging), planting, field care, land maintenance, harvesting, and storage. Storage training included hands-on demonstrations on building boxes from clay, which are lined with sand. In this box, the tuber can be stored safely for up to two-three months. Each successful harvest was accompanied by a utilization training, emphasizing the nutritional content of the food and how it can be incorporated into traditional meals suitable for various members of the households, particularly children under five. District staff carried out this training, with facilitators comprising agriculture, nutrition, and environmental health staff to emphasize the importance of sanitation and hygiene during food preparation and before feeding.

Follow-Up Support: all households received regular monitoring from the district throughout the farming season, ensuring they were adhering to best practices and checking for any abnormalities in plant growth.

Phase-Out Strategy: each household is directly supported over the course of three years. During the first year, they receive technical training, OFSP vines, and farming tools (boots, cutlasses, hoes, etc.). During the second year, they receive only the vines. During the third year, all input donations cease and the households are linked to vine multiplication sites and farmers where they can purchase vines or draw from their own source that they have preserved from the previous year. Every year, all communities receive periodic monitoring from district agricultural staff, including prompting for timely weeding, observations on tuber growth and observations for pest infestations.

Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) cultivation commenced under the RING project in the North Gonja District Assembly in 2015. This intervention was systematically scaled up in the district upon consultation with the other 17 RING implementing MMDAs following the promising results of the 2015 pilot. Initially, this intervention was carried out with individual beneficiaries, but, over time, the district layered the intervention onto the VSLAs. Each group was provided with 7,000 vines to cultivate for that season and was encouraged to engage in the block farming approach to reduce the level of effort required for extension services and harvesting support.

With the support of the University for Development Studies (UDS), North Gonja established a Decentralized Vine Multiplication site to build local capacity in vine multiplication, ensuring more households have access to vines and reducing challenges related to transportation of vines across the region from the UDS mother site. District staff were also fully trained on OFSP production from start to finish to support their facilitation of future trainings with interested farmers.

Over the lifetime of the project, the district engaged 57 communities and 2,735 farmers to cultivate 56 acres of land. Over 847,466 vines were distributed through this effort. Subsequently, 195 MT of OFSP roots were harvested, an average of 3.5 MT per acre. The table below provides a year by year performance summary for North Gonja OFSP efforts throughout the RING Project.

Table 2 District OFSP Performance Summary

Year	# Comm'ties	# of Farmers	Quantity of Vines Distributed	# of Acres Cultivated	Qty Harvested (KG)	Average Yield/ Acre (KG)
2018	35	1,929	602,000	41	172,447	4,206.02
2017	N/A	N/A	204,966	12.2	21,405.20	1,754.52
2016	N/A	N/A	40,500	3	880	314.29
2015	N/A	N/A	5,018.7	0.34	2,516	7,400
Totals	57	2,735	847,466	56	194,732.20	3,477.36

In comparison to other RING districts cultivating OFSP, the district fared well, resulting in a 98% higher acre yield average, compared to the other districts' 1.77MT per acre. A number of factors accounted for these high yields. The Assembly obtained healthy planting material from the DVMs in a timely manner, ensuring participating VSLAs were able to plant earlier in the season. The district also did not undergo as much sporadic rainfall that other parts of the region experienced in the last several years. This, coupled with intensive and consistent technical support from extension agents, results in solid harvests.

During this experience, the Assembly has noted several lessons learned to support continued successful cultivation of OFSP. These include:

- Access to land preparation services in a timely is essential for timely planting;
- Timely extension services covering land management, production, harvesting, utilization and storage greatly benefits partnering households and has an impact on their overall yields; and
- Frequent monitoring during the season results in more proactive efforts by the farmers and ensures best practices are adhered to.

Soybean Cultivation

Soybean Activity Summary

Activity Purpose: soybeans are a nutrient rich crop that, although not native to northern Ghana, have become quite prevalent in the past decade, emerging into a cash crop. Throughout its evolution, women have had a majority, or equal footing when it comes to soybean cultivation, due to the low labour intensity for field management and harvesting, cleaning and storage. The bean itself is also a versatile and nutritious addition to the local diet; the flour can be easily incorporated into a number of traditional meals and the leaf, when fresh, can be added to a variety of stews. For these reasons, soybean cultivation was prioritized over the life of the RING project as one method of diversifying household diets with nutrient-rich foods.

Training: as with all crop cultivation activities, households received basic training on land preparation, planting, field care, land maintenance, harvesting, and storage. Storage training for soybeans included the promotion of the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) sacks, which are proven to reduce post-harvest losses due to spoilage or pest infestation. Storage training also emphasized proper drying and cleaning of the seeds before putting them into the PICS sacks. Utilization trainings were facilitated by agriculture, nutrition and sanitation staff from the district, each emphasizing crop diversification, nutritional impact from consumption, and the importance of hygiene during food preparation, respectively. Trainings were spread over time to take place at the appropriate moment during the agricultural cycle (i.e. planting, then maintenance, then harvesting).

Follow-Up Support: all households received regular monitoring from the district throughout the farming season, ensuring they are adhering to best practices and checking for any abnormalities in plant growth.

Soybean Activity Summary (cont'd)

Phase-Out Strategy: each partnering household was directly supported over the course of three years. During the first year, they received technical training, farming inputs, such as seeds and plowing support, and farming tools (boots, cutlasses, hoes, PICS sacks, etc.). During the second year, they received only the seeds and plowing services. During the third year, all input donations ceased and the household is successfully linked to the market in which they can purchase their own seeds. Every year, all households receive periodic monitoring from district Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA).

Soybean cultivation began under the RING project in the district in 2015. Initially, the district opted to plant on one-acre-plots to ensure the participating women a greater opportunity for larger yields. However, over time, the district realized that the time burden associated with cultivation and ultimately management of a one-acre plot (in addition to other farming and household duties) was adversely affecting yield performance. In 2016, after consultation with the Regional Agriculture Department (RAD) and the Global Communities RING technical team, the Assembly opted to shift to a half-acre cultivation support approach to ensure that women could effectively adhere to the best practices in field management, particularly timely weeding efforts.

Over the lifetime of the project, North Gonja District engaged 30 communities and 1,384 farmers to cultivate 1,288 acres of land. This resulted in a total of 428 MT harvested, an average of 332 kg/acre.

Table 3 District Soybeans Performance Summary

LOP Totals	# Comm'ties	# of Farmers	# of Acres Cultivated	Qty Harvested (KG)	Average Yield/ Acre (KG)
	30	1,384	1,288	427,910.8	332

Though the results fell short of the 772 kg per acre average of the Northern Region³, one must consider that, under RING, households were not encouraged to use chemicals such as fertilizer or pesticides. This was both due to costs and hazards associated with potential inappropriate application and was in compliance with USAID guidelines on the matter. To achieve these results, the district engaged routinely with households throughout the season, ensuring best farming practices were followed. As with the OFSP, erratic rainfall patterns persisted throughout the life of the project, as well as some administrative delays experienced in obtaining approval from USAID to purchase restricted agricultural commodities with US government funds.

In the Assembly's experience working with the communities to provide direct support with soybeans, tractor plowing services, guidance on land management and harvesting and storage, the Agriculture Team has taken note of several lessons learning, including:

- Preparation for the upcoming farming season must be done in a timely manner – this includes identification of seed suppliers and tractor service suppliers;
- Proper community sensitization must be carried out before undertaking any sort of agriculture intervention at the community level; and
- Frequent check-ins with community groups must be undertaken throughout the season to ensure that households are abiding by best practices (particularly timely weeding, to be done twice during the growing season).

³ Source: Northern Regional Agriculture Department (RAD) 2017 harvest data

Dry Season Leafy Green Vegetable Cultivation with Drip Irrigation

Leafy Green Vegetables with Drip Irrigation Activity Summary

Training: training for LGV cultivation focused on the mechanics of the drip irrigation system set up and maintenance for a 1,000 square meter garden plot rather than cultivation of vegetables as those promoted under the activity are indigenous and the women are already well-versed in their planting and care from experiences during the rainy season. Plots were placed near a reliable year-round water source and outfitted with the simple and reliable gravity-fed drip irrigation system. Before planting, the drip kit suppliers and area mechanics conducted on-site installation and maintenance training for the women's groups, including setting up the lines, plant spacing, how to use the water pump, and basic trouble-shooting.

Follow-Up Support: district staff provided regular monitoring support to the women and gather data surrounding consumption and sales of harvests.

Phase-Out Strategy: after the initial distribution of the drip irrigation systems (including seeds and farming tools), the districts maintained their monitoring support for a period of 2-3 years. Each group was supported with VSLA as well, enabling the women access to cash needed to maintain the low-cost drip irrigation kits. Because the suppliers did the installation and training, the women have market relationships with the firms that can help them maintain their drip systems over time.

The district began the cultivation of dry season leafy green vegetable cultivation in 2016. The interest was based on positive feedback from other districts that began the effort in 2015. Due to year-round water needs, the district targeted communities with a reliable water source to enable cultivate deep into the dry season. The overall purpose of the intervention was to provide women and their families with nutritious foods during a particularly scarce period of the year, as well as extra income from the sales of surplus plots. To ensure the effective management of the drip irrigation kits, the DAD AEAs, with support from community Area Mechanics, trained women in the utilization of drip systems, land preparation and care and management of small sized vegetable plots. To create opportunities for men's involvement in the activity to reduce the workload on women, community members were sensitized to support the women in the erection of fences, pumping of water, and land preparation.

Over the life of the project, North Gonja engaged 12 communities and 900 farmers with support to install 102 drip irrigation kits. This resulted in 15.2 acres of land under cultivation and ultimately more than 1,224 kgs of greens harvested. The average performance reflected 80.53 kg harvested per acre, which was low in comparison to the 564 kg/acre averaged by other RING districts undertaking the intervention. This can be attributed to late starts in implementation and water bodies drying up earlier in the dry season than expected.

Overall, women engaged in the intervention were quite enthusiastic about the effort. Over the life of the project, households consumed over 800 kgs of leafy green vegetables and sold 411 kgs, resulting in profits for GHS 407. In addition to the money made by the farmers themselves, they also provided a great resource to other families who may not have otherwise had access to leafy greens, such as *biraa*, *aleefu*, and *ayoyo*, during this part of the year.

Table 4 District LGV Performance Summary

Year	# Comm' ties	# of Farmers	# Kits Installed	# of Acres Cultivated	Qty Harvested (KG)	Qty Consumed (KG)	Qty Sold (KG)	Profits (GHS)
2018	4	539	68	8	1,120	765	355	232
2017	7	281	28	6.2	68	40	28	N/A
2016	1	80	6	1	36	8	28	175
Totals	12	900	102	15.2	1,224	813	411	407

In the Assembly's experience working with the communities to support dry season cultivation through drip irrigation, a number of lessons learned have been noted, including:

- Access to spare parts for drip kits is imperative, necessitating linkages between the groups and parts vendors;
- Timely re-installation of kits from year to year drastically affects the yields and potential number of harvests each season; and
- Frequent check-ins with community groups must be undertaken throughout the season to ensure that households are abiding by best practices; and
- Involvement of men is very critical if women beneficiaries are to maximize yields from their gardens.

Small Ruminant Rearing

Small Ruminants Activity Summary

Training: training topics covered animal housing, supplementary feeding, and disease control and recognition. District staff carried out the training at the community level with households, then covered a much more in-depth level of information with Community Livestock Workers, especially in providing basic medical care to animals (i.e. wound treatment, closed castration, deworming).

Follow-Up Support: households were monitored regularly after receiving the animals, particularly in the two months immediately following distribution. CLWs also supported households with basic medical care, and alerted district officials if there were any emerging health issues or concerns. General monitoring was intense during the first four months following distribution, then tapered off to gradual interaction, generally to monitor lambing, mortality and sales data.

Phase-Out Strategy: each household received a one-time donation of three female animals. After receipt of the animals, the district provided general monitoring support over the course of 2-3 years, upon which time, the household should have successfully established a small herd of sheep and could maintain the animals on their own.

North Gonja District Assembly began implementation of the small ruminant intervention in 2016 with the aim of diversifying household income streams and creating an asset cushion during times of need. The district's strategy in engaging women centered on strengthening their capacity to effectively care for the animals, typically considered part of the male domain in northern Ghana, to ultimately benefit their families. Community Livestock Workers (CLW) were also trained by the district to provide a local level of basic animal husbandry support to participating families, as well as to assist the Assembly in gathering critical data on herd performance.

Over the lifetime of the project, the Assembly engaged 29 communities and 1,100 women in the provision of 3,251 small ruminants (this included ewes to each household and a number of healthy rams for each CLW). Of those provided, households reported selling 7% of the animals to address pressing household needs and cushioning families against external shocks, such as crop losses from bad weather, and the educational and health needs of families. Lambing rates were 54 %, while mortality rates were 24%, representing a 25% decrease in herd size. The Assembly

performance was low in comparison to other RING partnering MMDAs, which averaged a 9% herd growth over the life of the project. This performance is attributable to difficulties in accessing most communities for supportive supervision, particularly during the rainy season when many communities located across the lake and rivers are cut off. Additionally, the lack of access to sales points in communities to procure medicines for treatment of sick animals, vehicle collisions, and consumption of littered polythene bags result in untimely deaths. To curtail the levels of mortalities or missing animals, DAD Vet Officers have made sure that beneficiaries are sensitized on properly housing and treatment of

District Performance Summary

Since 2016:

- 29 communities reached
- 1,100 farmers supported
- 54% lambing rate
- 24% mortalities
- 7% sold
- 25% decrease in herd size

animals are prioritized while construction of animal housing over the past 2 years became a condition for the receipt of animals.

Table 5 District Small Ruminants Performance Summary

Cumulative Totals	Communities Reached	Households Supported	Animals Supplied
	29	1100	3,251

In the Assembly's experience with the communities in providing support in management and care of small ruminants, the District Agriculture Team has taken note of several lessons learned including:

- Establishing strict protocols for intake, quarantine, and distribution of animals is key to reducing mortalities and ensuring that quality animals are distributed to households;
- CLW support is essential for improved management of livestock at the community level; and
- Ensuring beneficiaries of small ruminant distributions are members of VSLAs reduces the tendency for members to sell off animals prematurely in order to meet a pressing need – providing an alternative for a small amount of credit can prevent the decimation of a herd before it can grow.

Shea Collection and Market Linkages

North Gonja District Assembly began implementation of the shea collection and market linkages intervention in 2015 with the aim of diversifying household income streams, creating an economic cushion during times of need. Though shea parboiling and butter processing is a traditional activity for women in northern Ghana, consistency of product quality is a key driver in how successfully a group can attract a premium market with their product. The RING strategy with this intervention included linking community based women's groups with larger amounts of raw shea nuts to sell with both international and domestic aggregators; this reduced the quality control issues with the processing, as well as reduced women's time burden by removing that aspect from the value chain. Because of the volume of shea involved when the women's group worked together, many of the aggregators were willing to provide transportation of the nuts as a condition of their purchase. This layer of additional support reduced the costs and time burden borne by the women who would have otherwise had to travel to local markets to sell on an individual basis. Their collective buying power also helps them to secure a fair price from the aggregators.

Over the lifetime of the project, the Assembly engaged 5 communities and 503 women in collection and sale of shea nuts. Beneficiaries report collecting 99,800 kgs of shea nuts, which they then sold to aggregators, who were members of the Shea Network Ghana or the Global Shea Alliance (a consortium of domestic and international buyers committed to Fair Trade principles). The women then generated profits from these sales which they put toward IGA investments or pressing family needs. Although this intervention was supported for only 3 years under RING, the Assembly continued to engage with the groups to provide supportive monitoring during the last year of the project.

This performance is attributable to routine monitoring services provided by the Assembly, equipping beneficiaries with protective equipment (wellington boots, gloves, torchlights, etc.), quality nuts training and linking groups to buyers.

In the Assembly's experience with the communities in providing support to beneficiaries of the intervention, the District Agriculture Team has taken note of several lessons learned including:

- Women's ability to supply quality nuts has the potential of attracting aggregators and premium prices for their nuts;
- Consistent and intensive monitoring and support to beneficiaries is critical for them to make bulk sales; and

- Ensuring beneficiaries are members of VSLAs increase the tendency of pulling nuts together to take advantage of the benefits of bulk sales.

Poultry Rearing

Poultry Activity Summary

Training: training topics covered bird housing, preparation of local feed, feeding for animals, proper sanitation, records keeping and disease control and recognition. District staff carried out the training at the community level with households, then covered a much more in-depth level of information with Community Livestock Workers, especially in providing basic medical care to birds, providing medication,

Follow-Up Support: households were monitored regularly after receiving the birds, particularly in the two months immediately following distribution. CLWs also supported households with basic medical care, and alerted district officials if there were any emerging health issues or concerns. General monitoring was intense during the first four months following distribution, then tapered off to gradual interaction, generally to monitor lambing, mortality and sales data.

Phase-Out Strategy: each beneficiary group received a one-time donation of between 300 to 500 birds. After receipt of the animals, the district provided general monitoring support over the course of 2-3 years, upon which time, the household should have successfully established and can maintain and care for the birds on their own.

The North Gonja District Assembly began implementation of the poultry intervention in 2017 as a pilot with the aim of diversifying household nutrition through egg consumption and income streams through egg sales by creating an asset cushion during times of need. The district's strategy in engaging women centered on strengthening their capacity to effectively manage on a small scale commercial layer birds, typically considered part of the male domain in northern Ghana, for the ultimate benefit of their families. Community Livestock Workers (CLW) were also trained by the district to provide a local level of basic animal husbandry support to participating families, as well as to assist the Assembly in gathering critical data on herd performance.

Over the lifetime of the project, the Assembly engaged one community and 20 women in the provision of 536 commercial layer birds. Of those provided, households reported collecting 29,712 eggs out of which 2,388 eggs were consumed and 24,936 eggs sold. Incomes realized from sale of eggs was GHS 12,600. Of profits made from egg sales, 60% was saved for the continuous management of the intervention (procuring new birds, feed, and medications), with the remaining 40% shared among members to address pressing household needs and cushioning families against external shocks, such as crop losses from bad weather, and educational and health needs. The mortality rates of the birds over the entire period was 29%.

Table 6 District Poultry Performance Summary

Cumulative Totals	Communities Reached	Households Supported	# of Birds Received	# of Eggs Collected	# of Eggs Sold	Profit from Egg Sales (GHS)
	1	20	536	29,712	24,936	12,600

The Assembly performed fairly well in comparison to other RING partnering MMDAs, with an average of 29,712 eggs collected over the life of the project. The district will have performed remarkably well but for initial challenges faced due to mortalities occurring as a result of poor sanitary conditions during quarantine and at beneficiary poultry housing. Despite these challenges, the poultry performance improved significantly partly due to the district Veterinary Officers responsiveness to the technical advice to beneficiaries and improved flow of funds to the district allowed for consistent supply of feed and medication, consistent routine monitoring services provided by the Assembly, regular treatment of

the animals for minor diseases and injuries, strict adherence to proper sanitation, feeding regimen by the beneficiary households, and timely engagement of district veterinary services by the CLWs. To curtail the levels of mortalities, DAD Vet Officers have made sure that beneficiaries are sensitized on properly observing housing sanitation, reporting unusual observations in birds to CLWs for prompt action and treatment of animals are prioritized.

In the Assembly's experience in providing support in management and care of the birds at the community level, the District Agriculture Team has taken note of several lessons learned including:

- Establishing strict protocols for intake of birds is key to reducing mortalities and ensuring that healthy day-old-chicks are distributed to groups;
- CLW support is essential for improved management of poultry at the community level;
- Consistent and intensive monitoring and support to groups during the first two months following delivery of birds is critical for the women to understand and appreciate the need to adhere to the recommended feeding, sanitation and medical protocols; and
- Ensuring poultry group members are part of VSLAs reduces the tendency for members to sell off animals prematurely in order to meet a pressing need – providing an alternative for a small amount of credit can prevent the decimation of a flock before it can grow.

Nutrition Activity Overviews

Through the Assembly's partnership with the RING Project, the North Gonja District carried out a number of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive activities at the district, sub-district, and community levels. The district employed different strategies, such as capacity building, supportive supervision visits, and close engagement with the communities via Community Health Volunteers (CHV) and support groups, among others for the successful implementation of the activities toward maximum impact of changing behavior positively for improved nutrition and health. Through a strategic partnership with RING during implementation of key activities that fall along the continuum of care in strengthening health service delivery, North Gonja has contributed toward national goals of reducing malnutrition. The following curricula and approaches were utilized by the District Health Management Team (DHMT) to ensure integration and effective support and partnership with Ghana Health Services (GHS):

- Community-based Infant and young child feeding (CIYCF), which harnessed cascading trainings from health workers (HW) to CHVs and other community support groups.
- Community based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) trainings and follow-up visits also built capacities of both health staff and CHVs and provided platforms for community based case searches and counseling, ensuring that knowledge and skills on appropriate feeding practices exist at the community level.
- Anemia Prevention and Control (APC) for both HWs and CHVs through capacity building efforts augmented by technical support visits is another strategy used.
- Health worker trainings in Data Utilization, outreach planning, Logistics and Commodity Management and Quality Improvement (QI) leveraged on existing partnerships to expand upon and improve the use of data for decision making, as well as district nutrition indicators.
- Other community level activities targeted at leaders and groups with a focus on building community level structures to sustain gains made by the project, including: Stunting Advocacy Video (SAV) screenings, Father-to-Father Support Groups (FTFSG), Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MTMSG), cooking demonstrations and integrated durbars.
- Utilization of a multi-sectoral approach to improving nutrition by building the capacity of School Health Education Promotion (SHEP) Teachers, Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA), and Environmental Health Officers and Agriculture Extension Agents on integrating Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) into their routine activities.

These activities provided health staff, community leaders and caregivers with knowledge of optimal health and nutrition practices while providing motivation and support for families to adopt those practices. The goals of these activities are to reduce negative effects of food shortages and enhance community capacity to restore livelihoods and improve nutritional status. The figure below outline capacity building efforts in the above-mentioned areas since the project start in 2015.

North Gonja	CMAM	C- IYCF	ANEMIA	MTMSG Facilitators	#MTMSG LOP	FTFSG-HW	ENA	SAV Lessons	SAV- Dissemina tion	Commodity Mngt.	Outreach Pl.	Data U	QI	Integrated Comm. Eng
HW	140	32	84			5		63		149	47	53	62	
CHV	166	97	108			5								
Non-HW/ Participants				307	183	15	60		974					19803

Figure 4 Capacity Building Efforts in Nutrition over the LOP

Capacity Building for Health Workers

CMAM: RING provided support for the North Gonja DHMT to conduct health staff training on CMAM to improve the screening and treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). All health facilities and all strategic facility staff in the district were covered through effective targeting of health professionals who come into contact with children under 5 years (CU5). In all, 140 (116.6%) HWs were targeted and trained. The CMAM OPC training programme has tremendously improved the situation of SAM management in the district, as currently, nearly all health facilities actively search for SAM cases during their routine static and outreach clinics. Per District Health Information Management System (DHIMS) data and district reports during this period, this has led to an increase in CMAM cure rates from 60% in 2015 to 72% in 2019, while first trimester Vitamin A increased from 21.9% in 2016 to 38.2% in 2019. This achievement is largely attributed to the capacity building support provided to health workers.

C-IYCF: The District Health Directorate, with support from RING, prioritized building capacity of HWs in C-IYCF to promote nutrition best practices, improve counselling, and prevent malnutrition among the First 1000 Days population. 32 (26.7 %) HWs were targeted and trained, representing 26.7% of key staff in the district. The C-IYCF training programme has tremendously improved IYCF activities in the district. Almost all health facilities routinely provide targeted counselling during child welfare and antenatal clinics (CWC and ANC), records of which are found in the IYCF registers. The number of pregnant women and mothers with children under 2 years triaged for counseling has significantly increased which could partly have contributed to the reduction in number of children with underweight (weight-for-age indicator) in the district. Per the DHIMS data and district annual reports, underweight amongst CU5s also reduced from 6.7% in 2014 to 2.5% in 2019.

APC: Training on anemia prevention and control was conducted to augment health worker efforts in improving anemia testing and counselling support for pregnant women. A total of 84 (70%) health workers have been trained on the APC curriculum. RING supported the district with HemoCue devices and testing strips and trained staff on its use to improve the general testing capacity of the district. As a result, APC efforts have significantly improved in the district. About 70% of critical HWs have been trained on the curriculum and provide critical services in the areas of antenatal care, postnatal care, growth monitoring, and counseling to community members at both static and outreach clinics.

ENA: Over the period, GHS, with RING support, has used a multi-sectoral approach to improve nutrition at the district level by integrating appropriate nutrition messages (using ENA curricula) into various decentralized departments (Agriculture, Environmental Health, Community Development, and Ghana Education Service) that conduct nutrition sensitive activities. A total of 60 non-health workers

including, School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Teachers, Environmental Health Officers (EHO), Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA), and Community Development Officers were trained, respectively, to disseminate nutrition messages at their various levels of programming. The training of the non-health workers on the ENA built their skills and competencies to disseminate the key messages during their routine activities. Follow-up monitoring reports from the district suggest community members were engaged effectively through those officers' routine outreach and, because of that, some have become community change agents and continuously help to influence behavior positively.

Capacity Building for Community Health Volunteers

CHVs provide a direct link from health service providers to the community and play an essential role in promoting nutrition and other health related issues at the community level. North Gonja District Health Administration (DHA) continued to make use of this interplay with support from the RING and trained a total of 166 (92.2%) CHVs on CMAM, 97 (53.8%) on CIYCF and 108 (60%) on APC; these CHVs represented 90 total communities. These capacity building efforts equipped CHVs to better integrate essential messages into MTMSG discussions and community home visits. CHVs are now able to better support HWs during outreach services with community mobilization, weighing, SAM case search, community level referrals and targeted counselling. According to the districts' 2018 annual report, about 70% of trained CHVs are active at the community level thus creating an information continuum for health services delivery in the district.

Health Systems Strengthening: Data Utilization and Outreach Planning

GHS through RING support trained 105 (87.5%) health staff on outreach planning services and data utilization, ultimately equipping HWs with relevant skills to plan and implement outreaches in order to maximize the impact of the effort, as well as ensure the best use of resources at the community level. Outreach services have improved targets and reduced dropout rates for immunizations, ANC, and CWC services. By utilizing data from previous outreaches, sub-districts have created more outreach points and planned effectively with community members to conduct higher-impact/more relevant outreach sessions. The Community-based Health Planning Services (CHPS) strengthening programme has also made progress. In present times, all health facilities now plan before embarking on outreach visits and data generated at the facility level are now used by facility staff to inform facility level decision making. Other services, such as defaulter tracing, home visiting, MTMSG monitoring, and CHV monitoring, are now properly integrated with outreach services by some facilities instead of limiting it to only weighing and immunization of children. Feedback from community members revealed that facility staff now visit more routinely to provide outreach services compared to before. Follow up also indicated a reactivation of facility data teams to help validate their own data to ensure submission of quality information for informed decision making.

Health Systems Strengthening: Health Facility Outreach Efforts

Ghana's vision for health care is to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by bringing health services to the doorstep of every Ghanaian. The North Gonja DHA works to achieve this by conducting monthly outreach services to ensure the provision of health services to all citizens. RING provided some level of support for the implementation of outreach services activity including capacity building and provision of logistics. Outreach services have contributed to improving health targets and reducing dropout rates for immunizations, ANC and CWC services. By utilizing data from previous outreaches, sub-districts have created more outreach points and planned effectively with community members to conduct effective outreaches.

Health Systems Strengthening: Quality Improvement

In 2017, RING supported the DHA by initiating facility-level QI activities to improve effectiveness and efficiency of health service delivery processes at the health facility and community levels. To support a downstream training approach, RING trained 10 key DHA staff as QI Coaches to enable them provide technical support to all 13 health facilities implementing the activity. Eleven health staff were also trained as In-charges to enable them facilitate formation of QI teams, and integrate and manage QI activities at the facility level. Subsequently, the district trained and formed 13 QI teams with 41 (34.2%) health staff trained as QI team members. QI is currently used as tool to improve all weak performing indicators in the district, ranging from low ANC coverage to improved facility level deliveries. The district has recorded 13 team meetings, 3 rounds of coaching visits, and conducted 3 peer learning sessions in support of the 13 facility teams. The QI approach has made progress as currently 8 of 13 facilities in the district have well-functioning teams that meet regularly and use their meetings as a platform to improve indicator coverages and service delivery through the continuous testing of change ideas.

Health Systems Strengthening: Commodity Management

GHS through RING embarked on a new strategy to train staff in commodity management on-the-job. 146 staff from the district's 9 facilities were trained on proper management of nutrition commodities in line with the principles guiding GHS' system to provide more effective and efficient services. These trainings encouraged HWs to use job aids to perform logistics management procedures, complete bin cards, and complete the integrated Report, Requisition, Issue and Receipt Voucher. RING further supported the District Health Directorate to purchase commodity storage shelves for all facilities.

Community Engagement: Utilization Trainings and Integrated Durbars

Under RING, the district promoted the cultivation and consumption of high nutritious crops including Orange Flesh Sweet Potatoes (OFSP), leafy greens vegetables (LGV) and soybeans. District-level staff facilitating the community outreach activity ensure that the demonstrations included a strong element of nutrition education. As a result, the value of the cooking demonstrations went above crop utilization skills and became a platform for social behavior change. The utilization training/cooking demonstration are largely conducted through the various MTMSGs at the community level. A multi-sectoral team of district facilitators (agriculture, WASH, community development and health) support members of the MTMSGs to ensure a clean cooking environment and to properly prepare various nutritious recipes. Interaction with some community members revealed that communities have adopted recipes and practices promoted during the demonstrations and durbars. In larger communities, the sale of "soya" (locally made soy-based kebab) was introduced as a result of these demonstrations. Common discussion topics included practices related to exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, consumption of vitamin-A-rich foods, care for sick children, and referring cases of malnutrition. Community durbars paired with the utilization trainings are a key way to reach large audiences with nutrition messages in a practical manner. **Over the life of the project, the district reached 19,803 people from 90 communities with various levels of utilization trainings and durbar-based outreach.**

Community Engagement: Mother to Mother Support Groups

The district, with RING support, trained 307 MTMSG Facilitators, who then supported formation of 183 MTMSGs across 40 communities. These groups were leveraged from the existing VSLAs.

All groups received radio sets with a series of pre-loaded drama programs on topics ranging from optimum nutrition practices to WASH, along with counseling cards to aid their group meetings or

discussions. These groups have contributed to an increase in knowledge-base and care practices for infants and young children by community members and have promoted the adoption of optimal IYCF practices by empowering women to use their savings groups incomes (or IGA profits) to improve family nutrition. The groups regularly meet and discuss the IYCF practices. The district continues to provide support for these groups by conducting routine monitoring visits to the groups to ensure groups get to understand the MTMSG concept for sustainable performance.

Community Engagement: Father to Father Support Groups

In mid- to late-2018, the district built the capacity of 3 senior health staff and 5 community HWs to lead FTMSG Facilitators training. Ten (10) community group facilitators, CHVs, and representatives of community MTMSGs were ultimately trained, resulting in five FTMSGs formed (this activity was kept at a pilot stage under RING with only five groups per district formed). Post-training following up indicates that the groups are conducting their meetings regularly and sharing practical experiences. One learning session has been held so far. Training and monitoring provided by the district staff through RING support has significantly improved groups' functionality, leading to an increase in uptake of family caretaking responsibilities, such as childcare provision and some types of household chores, formerly perceived as falling within the women's domain. It has also increased the knowledge-base and care practices for infants and young children by fathers. Men now take keen interest in the health and nutrition issues of their children by accompanying their wives to the health facilities for medical care.

Outcomes, Lessons Learned, and Challenges during Implementation and Recommendations for Future Health & Nutrition Programming

1. Ensuring continuous monitoring and technical support proved effective for all thematic areas in improving service delivery. The use of recommended checklist has been useful in ensuring standardization of monitoring visits to both health workers and community members.
2. The integrated approach of the community level programs and outreach services where CHVs, HWs and community members are involved in planning and roll out of activities improves participation, acceptability and programme effectiveness. Messages on nutrition and health best practices are well coordinated to avoid confusion and conflicting messages.
3. Provision of job aids and other resources for community level groups, increased community engagement and group functionality.
4. For the CMAM program, improvements from the first three years of the implementation also faced setbacks following shortages in ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) availability; this led to decreases in cure rates at the facility level.
5. The remarkable improvements in documentations and commodity management through the provision of bin cards, ledger booklets, shelves among others, were also hindered by regional level commodity shortages resulting from factors beyond the control of the district.

Based on the above lessons learned, progress noted in key activities, and priorities of the communities, district and national GHS, the district has identified the following areas to focus on beyond RING:

1. Based on improvements recorded across thematic areas due to efforts of routine technical support visits, the North Gonja District, plans to continue providing HWs, CHVs and community support groups with routine technical support visits, using outreach services as a vehicle.
2. Quality Improvement has been identified as a low cost activity with significant potential for improving data utilization and health indicators. The district will continue to monitor group activities and provide on-the-job coaching in QI for newly posted staff. This would be done via routine quarterly integrated monitoring and data validation visits to sub-districts, often led by the DDHS.

3. Critical district and facility staff and CHVs have been trained on the CMAM OPC protocols, IYCF and anemia. These would be harnessed to continue to provide targeted counselling using locally available foods to improve family nutrition.

More information can be found in the districts [Sustainability Strategy](#) within this document.

WASH Activity Overviews

Water, sanitation and hygiene efforts in the district have largely taken place at the community and household levels, focusing on performance gaps currently faced by the northern part of the country in terms of latrine accessibility and use and potable water access. Household changes in sanitation requires true behavior change, which necessitated consistent engagement by the District Environmental Health Assistants (EHA) to promote the best practices, and address challenges faced by community members. Management of repaired facilities, such as boreholes or institutional latrines, must also be led by community-based agencies that understand and appreciate the value of and need for the equipment and are committed to maintaining them. This required capacity building of some institutions and frequent engagement by the district to support them on their journey to self-reliance. The following contains a summary of achievements, lessons learned and ongoing efforts in WASH areas within the district.

Community-Led Total Sanitation

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS)

Activity Objective: for all households in the community to own and use latrines and hand washing stations and adopt other positive behaviors to ultimately end open defecation. There is typically little to no external funding support for construction of sanitation and hygiene facilities, except in the case of extremely poor people who cannot afford latrines for themselves and genuinely require support.

CLTS Process: this is a sanitation improvement process whereby small, homogeneous communities are supported to analyze their sanitation profiles and collectively take action to end open defecation. The process begins with community engagement, which includes taking demographic information on the community. Then 'triggering' occurs, which is when the facilitation team (usually a GOG official or a development partner) guides the community through a number of steps that spurs them into realizing that, by defecating in the open, it leads to consumption of human feces. Communities are then ignited to make changes within their means, and through the post-triggering process, the facilitation team supports households during siting of latrines, constructing them, and erecting hand washing stations (tippy taps). Over time, all community members stop open defecation and use latrines and tippy taps to halt fecal-oral transmission of sanitation related diseases.

Certification process: throughout implementation, communities conduct self-evaluation of their own progress in halting open defecation, and construction of latrines and tippy taps and general environmental cleanliness improvements. Once the community is satisfied with their performance, they request for District Interagency Coordination Committee for Sanitation (DICCS) and Regional Interagency Coordination Committee for Sanitation (RICCS) assessments and obtain ODF certification. If the community meets benchmarks for the assessment criteria, they are declared Open Defecation Free and the community will host a small durbar to celebrate the achievement.

Sustainability: following ODF certification, continued monitoring and provision of technical support for communities to move up the Sanitation Ladder is expected. Behavior change through the triggering process should hold for some time, but communities, by and large, will require long-term periodic engagement with the facilitation team to prevent "slippage" and spur communities to continue to improve their sanitation and hygiene situation uninterrupted.

North Gonja District Assembly began CLTS implementation in 3 communities in 2015 and expanded to 33 by close of the project. For the first three years, the district was unsuccessful in converting the communities to ODFs. In 2017 and 2018, the district however converted 2 and 6 communities to ODFs respectively, bringing the total number ODF communities to date to 8, representing 24% conversion

rate, which is lower than national and regional conversion averages. The district also trained 114 Natural Leaders, who facilitated construction of 733 household latrines, 492 hand washing stations, providing safe sanitation access to 5,791 people in those communities. The marginal CLTS performance stems from the fact that, most of the communities were unable to regulate sanitation behaviors of their inhabitants, due to weak community leadership and none availability of by-laws and sanctions to check nonconformist.

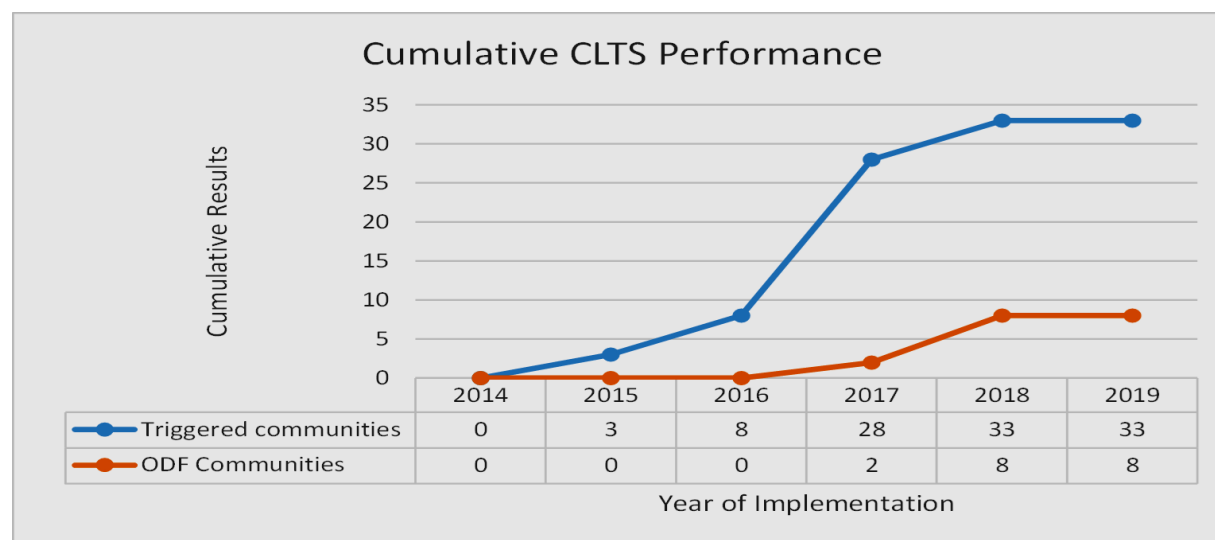


Figure 5 Summary of CLTS performance over the LOP

While implementing CLTS, the district CLTS facilitation team (DFT) learned a number of lessons relevant for sustainability and future sanitation programming, including:

- CLTS thrives well in small, homogenous and stable communities. The opposite holds for large and cosmopolitan settlements.
- Dynamic community leadership is a prerequisite to ODF achievement. Strong leadership result in proper regulation of sanitation behaviors, compelling household to construct and use latrines.

Borehole Rehabilitation, including WSMTs and Area Mechanics Training

Borehole Repairs

Activity Objective: providing potable water access is a significant step in preventing the transmission of diarrheal diseases that often result in malnutrition-related illnesses. This activity ensured that existing boreholes were functional and that regular maintenance was systematized at the community-level, preventing most minor breakdowns. Repairs were coupled with water and sanitation management team (WSMT) training, as well as training and outfitting of pump caretakers and Area Mechanics.

Process: all targeted boreholes were technically assessed to determine the extent of damage and parts needed for the repairs of the pump and its ancillary works. Upon successful completion of the technical assessments, inputs were procured and boreholes repaired by a trained Area Mechanic under the supervision of District Works or Water Engineers. Alongside the repairs, WSMTs and pump caretakers are re-constituted and trained on operation and basic maintenance of the water facilities.

Follow-Up Support: After the repairs are completed, the boreholes are handed over to the WSMTs for operation and maintenance. They then assume the responsibility of internal fund mobilization and safe keeping of the money to be used exclusively for maintenance of the borehole in future. The District Water and Sanitation Teams, monitor functionality of the boreholes and provides technical support for WSMTs to carry out their responsibilities without much hindrance.

From project inception to date, RING has supported the North Gonja District Assembly to repair 48 boreholes. As noted above, at the community level, these repairs are coupled with reconstitution and training of WSMTs and pump care takers to ensure continued maintenance and operations of the repaired facilities. In North Gonja, 22 WSMTs, 71 pump caretakers and 13 Area Mechanics were trained. Each borehole provides an average of 300 people with access to potable water, meaning 14,400 people from 22 communities benefitted from this intervention.

To ensure that water provided by the repaired boreholes met benchmarks for water quality, 8 samples were taken between 2017 and 2018, and submitted to Ghana Water Company Limited for testing. All the 8 samples met benchmarks for physical, chemical and biological parameters and deemed wholesome for human consumption.

Over the course of implementation, the North Gonja team has noted a number of lessons learned when it comes to repairing of water facilities and developing community maintenance structures. Some of those include:

- Teamwork leads to timely and quality implementation; as the borehole repairs intervention has so many sub-activities requiring different expertise, it is crucial for the Environmental Health and District Works Teams to coordinate efforts.
- Although most borehole water is odorless and colorless, it may contain excessive amounts of bacteria that is harmful to human health. Quality assurance testing is a straightforward way to ensure water provided will not cause any harm to community members.

Institutional Latrine Repairs

Institutional Latrine Rehabilitation Activity Summary

Activity Objective: provide facility users, especially young children and women of reproductive age, with alternative access to safe sanitation, while in school or seeking health care.

Process: prior to repair work, technical assessments were conducted to determine the extent of damage and repair requirements. Assessment reports were then validated by REHSU and Global Communities RING to ensure all issues have been captured in the report. Based on the assessment, inputs were procured and repair work commenced.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance: during rehabilitation, district supervisory staff, the region and Global Communities RING would conduct field visits to assess progress and advice on any alternations required.

Follow-Up: to ensure sustainability of the repairs made, facility managers were sensitized by the Assembly on proper maintenance and reporting mechanisms to alert the district if any further major repairs were required.

In North Gonja District Assembly, latrine repair efforts were implemented by Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit and District Works Department. While EHSU handled dislodging and proper disposal of fecal matter, DWD to supervise masonry and carpentry aspects of the implementation. From project inception to date, the district rehabilitated 8 institutional latrines in 4 basic schools with a total of 16 drop holes. Based on user data, these latrines were then able to provide safe sanitation access to approximately 800 people (design standard of 50 people per drop whole). In order to guarantee proper use and longevity of the rehabilitated latrines, health workers, teachers and school children of all beneficiary schools were sensitized on proper use, care and maintenance, particularly daily cleaning and disposal of anal cleansing materials.

While implementing the intervention, the staff learned the following lessons:

- Latrine repairs have two important components: dislodging and safe disposal of fecal matter, followed by the actual repairs. Proper implementation of the intervention requires close collaboration and communication between DWD and EHSU.
- Ineffective collaboration between two departments can result in improper disposal of fecal matter excavated, ultimately serving as a source of contamination to open water bodies and vehicle for quick spread of diarrhea-related diseases.

Hand Washing with Soap

Hand Washing Stations and Community Outreach Activity Summary

Activity Objective: to improve personal sanitation and hygiene behaviors among target audiences, even when they are outside the home. Targeting of key institutions, such as crèches, kindergartens, and health facilities, ensured high traffic from children under five and women of reproductive age and that transmission of diarrheal related illnesses is reduced through improved hygiene practices.

Process: to gain commitment of the beneficiary institutions on the use of the stations, the district organized sensitizations to discuss the rationale for the installation and the responsibilities of the institutions. Then the hand washing stations (locally fabricated water holding containers with taps, metal stands and a receptacle for waste water) were procured and installed, with at least one per institution. Alongside installations, use and maintenance demonstrations were conducted to provide users with basic information on the critical handwashing times and appropriate use.

Follow-Up Support: district staff conducted quarterly monitoring visits to beneficiary institutions to ensure the facilities are appropriately used and cared for.

Throughout the life of the RING Project, North Gonja District Assembly installed 116 hand washing stations in 99 locations (80 schools, 15 health facilities and 4 other public places). The district adhered strictly to the design guidelines shared with them by RING and the REHSU in 2015 and thus, always produced standard hand washing stations, with no or minimal defects. Alongside the installations, sensitization sessions were held at all locations to increase knowledge about the critical times and appropriate ways of washing hands with soap. During the demonstrations, teachers, health workers and school children took turns to practice washing their hands with soap.

To ensure that the hand washing stations contained water and are regularly used, the district staff conducted quarterly visits to the installed locations. In most cases, they found the hand washing stations containing water and soap. In some instances, teachers and school children were spotted washing their hands with soap, showing evidence of use.

During implementation of the intervention, the Assembly noted the following lessons learned:

- Regular water access is essential for the success of the intervention and continued effective management of the facilities;
- Adherence to specifications for the station construction ensures that the end product is high quality and long-lasting, reduces rusting and leakages associated with water holding facilities; and
- Routine monitoring by the Assembly has encouraged good management of the facility and appropriate use of the equipment.

Water Filtration and Safe Storage

Through partnership with RING, the Assembly was able to effectively expand potable water access to a number of communities where boreholes had already been established. However, in communities where there was no borehole available, there were limitations on what could be done to ensure people had access to safe drinking water. One mechanism to address this need was the distribution of locally

produced clay water filters to community members. Filter and storage container distributions were coupled with user and maintenance education sessions, as well as boxes of Aqua-Tabs (chlorine based tablets), safe and easy-to-use water treatment. Over the life of the project, the district supported 298 households in 9 communities with 461 boxes of aqua tabs and 298 household ceramic water filters. Over time, however, sustainability became an issue as the filters have a lifespan and could be cost prohibitive to replace for many households. Transportation of the items from the regional capital to the rural communities was also an issue; there were large costs associated with transportation, many of the clay filters would break *en route*, and households could not easily access replacement filters given the distances. Because of these challenges, the Assembly no longer implemented the activity after 2016, though it does recognize the positive impact made on the households that did benefit.

Good Governance Activity Overviews

Good governance interventions under the partnership with RING took on two forms – actual implementation of interventions, coupled with community engagement, and administrative efforts. The interventions focused on systems strengthening, particularly toward further decentralization, as well as delivery of social services, community engagement and solicitation of citizen feedback on development planning, and subsequent production of development plans. From the administrative side, district leadership centered efforts on strengthening public financial management to ensure that US government donor funds were appropriately managed and that the district's internal systems were in order to better manage GOG funding and locally generated resources. The following pages outline the Assembly's successes, lessons learned, and plans for the future concerning good governance activities in the district.

Sub-Structure Strengthening and Community Engagement

District Sub-Structure Strengthening & Community Engagement

Through sub-structure strengthening, Assembly staff are in a better position to deliver development services to their constituents due to more frequent contact, reduced distances between community members and Assembly staff, and the ability to generate operational funds through revenue mobilization campaigns. Under RING, sub-structure strengthening came in two forms – work occurring at the Council office itself, as well as outreach to the communities channeled through the sub-structure. More on both areas can be found below.

Sub-Structure Functionality

Rationale: Ghana's government is based on a decentralized system all the way to the community, but throughout the country, decentralization efforts have largely halted at the district level, reducing the ability of the Assembly to deliver development programming due to the time and costs required to cover great distances. For the same reasons, the Assembly's level of engagement with the community to seek feedback on development plans is hampered, reducing successful implementation of inclusive development planning and implementation reflective of local needs and priorities.

Preparation: to be functional, district sub-structures needed both staff and an inhabitable office to operate from. The Staff include Assembly representation (most often technical officers from agriculture, environmental health, and community development, among others, with some administrative staff as well), as well as elected or appointed community representatives known as Assembly Men or Women and Unit Committee Members. Before training sub-structure staff efforts began, human resources and physical logistics needs had to be addressed.

Training: once the office was operational with staff and logistics, training for those working from the office began. Topics included: an overview of the local government system (emphasizing roles and responsibilities for the Council and the management positions), environmental health management (to further stress the national government's prioritization of improved sanitation), internal revenue generation and management, community action planning & participatory monitoring &

Sub-Structure Functionality (cont'd)

evaluation, and advocacy, lobbying & social accountability, followed by Local Economic Development (LED) at a later period. The trainings were typically delivered by Assembly staff with support from Global Communities RING and, at times, representation from the Regional Local Government Inspector's Office.

Follow-up Support: upon receipt of training, staff began to work from the sub-structure, engaging in delivery of extension services to communities falling within the coverage area of the Council, as well as undertaking revenue mobilization campaigns based on agreed upon levies and fees. Staff from the district would periodically monitor the Council operations to ensure effective delivery of services.

Community Engagement via Sub-Structures

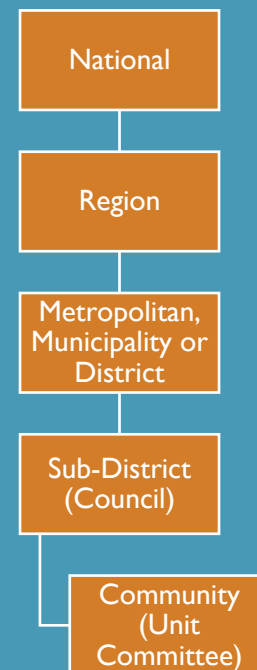
Purpose: GOG policies also indicate that development planning should be a participatory effort, with Assemblies seeking feedback from community members on their development needs and priorities. Utilizing the district sub-structures to hold such engagements is an effective use of time and resources, and also provides Council staff with concrete roles & responsibilities.

Types of Activities: outreach can be done in a larger groups setting or with more targeted individuals, but main purpose remains the same – information must be shared between the community and the Assembly, ideally with the Council acting as a conduit. Efforts the Assembly has undertaken include the GOG required quarterly meetings at the Council, Citizen's Forums (open to the larger public), the development of Community Action Plans (CAP) which are then harmonized into Council Plans and shared with the Assembly for incorporation into the District Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP), and then quarterly Area Council meetings, which are required by GOG mandate and include Assembly Members and Unit Committee Members, as well as other key stakeholders at the Council level.

The North Gonja District Assembly has 3 Area/Town Councils to represent its 64 communities. Under RING, sub-structure strengthening efforts began in 2016 with the 3 Area/Town Councils. Training of Councils representatives on their roles and responsibilities took place in 2016 with LED training occurring in 2018. To date, all the 3 Councils are deemed operational, meaning that Assembly staff regularly operate from those locations, the offices themselves are functional, and the officers posted routinely deliver extension services as well as embark on revenue mobilization campaigns. The last area is particularly relevant to sustainability of development efforts as 50% of the funds generated at the Council go to supporting general operational costs, including paying for utilities and office supplies, motorbike fuel to conduct outreach, associated costs with community forums and meetings, and, if the budget will be sufficient, small-scale development efforts, such as funding needy-but-brilliant students, repairing community water systems, or addressing emergency health needs.

During the partnership with RING, the Assembly was also able to compile 45 CAPs, which fed into the district MTDP for 2018 - 2021. Quarterly Council meetings have occurred regularly, and the Assembly has also utilized the sub-structure to undertake 7 Citizens Forums, open meetings that allow the sub-structure and

Ghana's Decentralized Structure



Assembly staff to engage with community members on topics of interest to them and information the Assembly needs to share with the citizenry.

Throughout this process, the Assembly has identified a number of promising outcomes and lessons learned, including:

- Delivery of services via the Area Council is an effective use of Assembly resources with consideration to time spent on outreach and the fuel and other logistical expenses incurred.
- Reducing the distance between the communities and the service providers (the Assembly) improves communication lines, builds trust, and encourages community members to become more active in governance issues.
- Ensuring that Council staff have the necessary logistics and are monitored to ensure they are carrying out their field work results in better performance by sub-structure staff and overall improvements in Council operations.

Based on these positive outcomes, the Assembly has identified several steps it can take to ensure that sub-structure strengthening gains remain institutionalized, including ensuring district staff are posted to the Council offices, ceding the required 50% of mobilized revenue back to the Council for general operations, monitoring Council operations, and continuing to hold community engagement activities and quarterly Council meetings. More information on the activities the Assembly intends to continue beyond the life of the RING Project can be found in the [Sustainability Strategy](#) within this document.

Social Protection and Expanding Linkages to GoG Safety Nets

Social Protection Efforts under RING

Under the auspices of RING, social protection efforts are undertaken in a number of ways, including direct engagement of targeted households, community outreach, formation of action committees per GOG mandates, and strategic layering with GOG social protection programs. A summary of each area can be found below.

Supportive Household Monitoring & Follow-up Visits

Activity Purpose: this activity was included in the RING menu in 2017 and involves logistical support to the District Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to make follow-up visits to LEAP and other social protection intervention households to ensure that key challenges were identified and addressed. District teams also meet regularly through the Strategizing and Progress Meetings to discuss the matters emanating from the field and explore measures to resolve them.

Training: officers have received numerous trainings on poverty graduation and social protection from the Regional Department of Social Welfare (RDSW) with support from Global Communities RING. Social Welfare Officers (SWO) are equipped with skills on proper targeting, procedures in signing up households for social support programs (such as health insurance), and providing counseling and follow-up care. Officers were also trained on basic malnutrition monitoring and referral mechanisms for Ghana Health Services.

Follow-Up Support: via supportive monitoring, reviewing field reports, and oversight during LEAP payment days, SWOs identify challenges, gather feedback, and support beneficiaries to address their needs or escalate them to the regional level, if needed.

Phase-Out Strategy: LEAP monitoring will continue to take place during LEAP payments, allowing SWOs to continue engaging with LEAP beneficiaries and taking stock of their challenges. SWOs will continue to utilize capacity gains to serve beneficiaries.

Community Outreach

Activity Purpose: to sensitize community members on social protection issues and encourage them to take action in addressing them. SWOs use a variety of approaches including storytelling, testimonials, visual aids and toolkits to discuss topics like child rights, child marriage, and social protection programs (ex. LEAP, NHIS, etc.), among other issues.

Training: SWOs received several capacity building trainings through the RDSW with support from Global Communities RING. These trainings focused on skills building for poverty graduation support, as well as understanding basic nutrition and WASH concepts to support integrated sensitization efforts.

Follow-Up Support: SWOs support communities to implement action steps and address any issues that arise.

Phase-Out Strategy: SWOs continue monitoring communities during LEAP payments and with support of the LEAP focal persons. Similar outreach events can be layered onto existing LEAP monitoring efforts to maximize resources.

District and Community Social Protection Committee Formations

Activity Purpose: District and Community Social Protection Committees coordinate, implement and monitor social protection efforts at the district and community-level in line with GOG's National Social Protection Policy. DSPCs lead social protection needs identification, integrate and mainstream social protection into district medium term development plans, collect data on all related activities, provide platforms for experience sharing and review of best practices in monitoring, evaluation and service delivery. They shall also establish a number of necessary sub-committees (Ghana Social Protection Policy, 2015) and facilitate formation of Community Social Protection Committees (CSPCs) who support social protection mobilization efforts, engage with the district for feedback or complaints, and develop a social protection action plan.

Training: DSPC trainings are led by the SWOs and DPCU to ensure they are aware of their mandates; CSPCs are then trained by the DSPC members to support their role in sensitizing communities on social protection, supporting household identification and data collection, assisting in monitoring and case management of beneficiaries, reporting on social protection activities and supporting linkages to other social protection programs and opportunities.

Follow-Up Support: DSPCs meet regularly to review social protection progress, challenges and next steps. SWOs and DPSC members regularly monitor CSPCs to ensure they meet regularly, implement their action plans, carry out their responsibilities, and provide feedback to the district.

Phase-Out Strategy: DSPCs and CSPCs are part of GOG policy. DSPCs should continue meeting regularly with the support of the Assembly, while SWOs will continue to monitor CSPCs during LEAP payments.

Linking LEAP Households to VSLAs

Activity Purpose: to support GOG poverty graduation efforts via their Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme, LEAP households have been integrated into existing VSLAs or new VSLAs have been started to cater to LEAP household members. Studies have shown that VSLA has a tremendous positive effect on building resiliency of LEAP households (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018).

Training: LEAP VSLA members go through the same training that is provided to the standard VSLAs, including VSLA mechanics, business planning, financial literacy and numeracy, among other things.

Follow-Up Support: district VSLA team members and SWOs monitor groups to ensure progress and proper backstopping as challenges are encountered. Support provided to LEAP VSLAs is in line with the standard VSLA monitoring strategy.

Phase-Out Strategy: SWOs assume some monitoring responsibilities of LEAP VSLAs, incorporating it into their bi-monthly LEAP payment outreach. SWOs have also worked with the LEAP Focal Persons to keep them informed in case any challenges arise between monitoring visits.

According to Ghana's National Social Protection Policy of (2015), Assemblies are responsible to "implement national social protection programmes in their localities with assigned resources and undertaking local, complementary social protection programmes including food security, education, health, housing, sanitation." In response, the Assembly, through RING support, introduced more deliberate social protection interventions in late 2015/early 2016 due to prioritization of social protection at the national level.

Under the above-listed social protection efforts, North Gonja Assembly has prioritized the following activities: household monitoring, Social Protection Committee formation at the district and/or community level, community outreach, and layering VSLA onto LEAP beneficiary households. Overall, these efforts have been quite successful. In undertaking the outreach, those working on social protection issues at the Assembly have noted a number of positive outcomes, including linking households to the National Health Insurance Scheme or addressing issues with renewal of existing accounts, addressing challenges faced by LEAP beneficiary households on accessing payment points, and connecting families with the Registry Office at the district to take record of recent births and deaths. The District Social Protection Committee (formed in 2018) has also supported formation of 4 CSPCs, which have been quite engaged in the community level efforts, facilitating linkages with ideal households for social protection programs and taking note of challenges for follow up by the Assembly. The North Gonja Assembly also conducted community outreach, sensitizing the citizenry on such relevant topics as child marriage, teenage pregnancy and school dropout, women's participation in local governance, and rising issues of linkages of LEAP beneficiaries to other social protection programmes among others. Communities reported taking action steps like sharing information with other community members, chiefs asking community members to report any children farming or weaving during schooling and night hours, and reporting cases of child abuse to the Assembly in order to address issues of child labor, school enrollment, and child abuse in their communities. Lastly, the Assembly opted in 2018 to begin integrated some LEAP beneficiary households into the highly successful VSLA intervention, which has proven to build economic resilience of families within the district. To date, 638 people have been linked to VSLAs in 22 communities. Results from their first year of implementation show that GHS 29,400 has been saved and GHS 9,500 has been loaned out to the members, providing a vital economic cushion for pressing household needs these families may face. Furthermore, women felt unity within their groups and were happy to have connections with other VSLA members where they can turn to discuss problems and seek advice.

District Performance Summary

Since 2016:

Household Monitoring:

- 729 LEAP beneficiaries monitored
- Number of people linked to:
 - NHIS registration or renewal – 635
 - Birth and Death Registration – 5

Community Outreach:

- 18 sensitizations carried out in 6 communities, reaching 729 people

DSPC (inaugurated in 2018)

- 16 members (15 men, 1 woman)
- 2 Meetings held

CSPC

- 4 CSPCs formed in 4 communities
- 36 members (32 men, 4 women)

Social Protection & Poverty Graduation Training

- 7 Assembly Staff (5 men, 2 women)

LEAP VSLAs

- 22 LEAP VSLAs formed in 22 communities with 638 members
- GHS 29,400 saved and GHS 9,500 loaned by LEAP VSLA members

In the Assembly's experience working in implementing these social protection interventions to strengthen service delivery, the district has taken away several lessons learned, including:

- Consistent household monitoring and strong case management is key to facilitating linkages to social safety nets, backstopping challenges, and supporting beneficiaries to build internal resiliency.
- CSPCs are effective in addressing social protection issues and supporting social protection programs in the communities, but need consistent monitoring and support to stay engaged.
- There is high demand from LEAP beneficiaries to join VSLAs, and preliminary results show that women develop an immediate culture of saving, increase their social capital, and increase their sense of financial security in the event of economic shocks.

Based on the success of the efforts under RING, North Gonja Assembly has identified a number of key areas it wishes to continue after the close of the project, including:

- Monitoring visits of LEAP beneficiaries to provide critical backstopping during LEAP payments by district officers.
- DSPC meetings will continue to coordinate and integrate social protection efforts in the district and effectively monitor and support the CSPCs.
- Monitoring of LEAP VSLAs by district officers to ensure the groups remain supported.

For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) found at the end of the document.

Gender Mainstreaming into Local Government and Community Development Efforts

Gender Efforts under RING

Under the auspices of RING, gender efforts are undertaken in a number of ways, including mainstreaming into government development plans and budgets, general community outreach, and engaging individuals via gender-related programming. Below is a summary of each area.

Gender Support Network

Activity Purpose: to mainstream gender at the district, Gender Desk Officers (GDO) conduct various activities to reach community members and district stakeholders. GDOs build their Gender Support Network (GSN) to coordinate, strategize and strengthen gender efforts throughout the district. The GSN is a platform established at the district that brings together appropriate stakeholders to identify areas and advocate for gender to be mainstreamed into development plans. This is done by discussing current gender-based gaps, strategizing on how to address them, coordinating stakeholder efforts, and monitoring and evaluating for quality implementation. Additionally, GDOs may also hold capacity building trainings for MMDA staff to sensitize them on new policies or other gender issues.

Training: GDOs received an initial capacity building training from Regional Department of Gender (RDOG) and Global Communities RING. GDOs also attend review meetings twice a year with capacity building components, these allow GDOs to share their experiences, discuss their challenges, and figure out their next steps.

Follow-Up Support: GDOs work together with their GSNs during meetings each quarter to track progress on their gender action plans and overall impact of efforts.

Phase-Out Strategy: GSNs require little resources to continue meeting and will continue to be led by the Coordinating Director with support of the Gender Desk Officers.

Community Outreach

Activity Purpose: to mainstream gender at the community level, GDOs conduct various types of outreach to engage community members on gender-related topics. GDOs will carry out community sensitizations, durbars or targeted outreach to address specific gender issues or gaps in their districts, ranging from sensitizing communities on the dangers of child marriage, increasing women's participation in governance, and reducing women's time burden, among other things. Depending on the district specific action plan, GDOs may also utilize other activities like radio sensitizations.

Training: GDOs received an initial capacity building training from the RDOG and Global Communities RING on their roles and responsibilities and foundational gender concepts. GDOs also attend semi-annual review meetings with capacity building components, such as M&E and ICT, built in; these forums allow GDOs to share their experiences, discuss challenges, and determine next steps. RDOG also provided facilitation guides, posters and materials to GDOs to strengthen their community sensitizations. Community members are also encouraged plan action steps to address the various issues raised during forums.

Follow-Up Support: GDOs monitor communities after the activities have taken place to track the progress in addressing the gaps or issues and implementing their action steps.

Community Outreach (cont'd)

Phase-Out Strategy: GDOs plan to continue monitoring and carrying out community sensitizations as the needs arise and to keep community members active in addressing gender issues.

The Regional Department of Gender and District Gender Desk Officers officially engaged with the RING Project in 2016. RING's gender approach is in line with the Government of Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) policies and frameworks and supports the National Gender Policy's (2015) goal "to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment concerns into the national development process in order to improve the social, legal, civic, political, economic and cultural conditions of the people of Ghana; particularly women and men, boys and girls in an appreciable manner and as required by National and International Frameworks," as well as its objectives. Under the leadership of the RDOG, RING supports several strategic interventions in pursuit of this goal. District GDOs, whose mandate is to mainstream gender into local development efforts, tailor action plans to localized needs then carry out the plans under the leadership of the RDOG and with support from Global Communities, RING's technical assistance contractor.

In addition to the policy, RING's gender priorities directly align with FTF's Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index's (WEAI) Gender Integration Framework in three key areas:

Increased Control & Use of Income

- Women increase their control over the use of income and have adequate control over and are engaged in decisions about the use of household income

Improved Time Use & Decreased Time Poverty

- Women are able to allocate time to desired productive and domestic tasks, leisure activities, increasing human capital and goal setting

Increased Social Capital & Leadership in the Community

- Beneficiaries have increased social capital, improved social networks, and an increased voice within their communities.

In 2016, North Gonja Assembly developed their Gender Desk Officer Action plan. Over the life of the project, North Gonja Assembly has reached 39 communities through gender outreach efforts, such as the importance of women's participation in decision-making and governance, reducing women's time burden, and understanding the local governance system, among others, reaching a total of 13,060 community members. North Gonja formed their Gender Support Network in 2018 with 15 members (12 men & 3 women). Since its inception, the GSN's key achievements include integrating gender activities into departmental annual action plans, developing an integrated District gender action plans, and reviewing District gender activities. Finally, North Gonja has carried out training for 43 (38 men & 5 women) in order to mainstream gender into the decentralized departments.

District Performance Summary

Since 2016, North Gonja, through their GDO and with support from the RDOG, have carried out a number of initiatives, including:

Community Outreaches:

- 39 community sensitizations & durbars and 13,060 men & women reached

Gender Support Network:

- Year inaugurated: 2018
- 15 Members (12 men & 3 women)
- 2 meetings held so far

Trainings Delivered:

- Gender Mainstreaming for 43 Assembly Staff

In the Assembly's experience working with the communities to mainstream gender and address gender gaps, the Gender Desk Officer and GSN members have taken note of several lessons learning, including:

- The Gender Support Network has given a voice to gender in the districts, and improved collaboration on gender efforts between decentralized departments and civil sector stakeholders.
- Monitoring and continued engagement with community members is critical to supporting communities to address gender issues.
- Leadership's commitment to gender is critical, especially to have adequate resources to implement the Gender Desk Officer Action Plans.

Based on the success of the efforts under RING, North Gonja has identified a number of key areas it wishes to continue after the close of the project, including:

- GSN Meetings to continue effective coordination of gender efforts in the district.
- Sensitizations and monitoring of beneficiaries to keep communities actively engaged in addressing gender inequities.

For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) found at the end of the document.

Public Financial Management

Public Financial Management Activity Summary

Focus Areas: Public Financial Management (PFM) under the RING project considers eight key thematic areas, including budget planning & execution, accounting & reporting, procurement, human resources & payroll, information technology (IT), cash management & treasury, internal controls, and audit & compliance.

Rationale for PFM Efforts: PFM activities under the RING project was aimed at strengthening the Planning, Organizing, Controlling and Monitoring of the use of public financial resource to ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes, accounted for properly and achieve 'value for money'. To achieve this aim it become necessary to put in place measures to address mostly inherent and control risks (see below) in the existing PFM system in a way that not only protects USG government investments in the RING Project, but also to further strengthens GoG systems for managing its own funds and resources.

Risk Assessments: Before the RING project officially began, USAID undertook an assessment of each MMDA's PFM systems based on the above focus areas. The assessment resulted in the identification of PFM risks categorized as critical, High, Medium and Low and further sub-divided MMDAs into directly funding (by USAID) and indirectly funded or sub-contracted (through Global Communities)

Risk Mitigation Plans: With the support of USAID and Global Communities RING, North Gonja District Assembly (NGDA) put in place a risk mitigation plan to address the PFM gaps over time thereby building more robust internal control systems. By the close of the project, the Assembly had addressed 100% of risks through a number of mechanisms, including training, regular meetings between key district officials, receiving coaching and mentorship from Global Communities RING and regional counterparts, and providing documentation of such efforts.

Before engaging with the RING project, the Assembly received a financial management risk assessment by USAID with the following outcomes:

Table 7 Summary of pre-award PFM assessment findings

PFM Thematic Area	Risk Levels (# of Risks)	PFM Thematic Area	Risk Levels (# of Risks)
Budget Planning & Execution	High (1)	Cash Management & Treasury	High (1) & Medium (1)
Procurement	Medium (1) & Low (2)	Accounting & Reporting	Medium (1)
Information Technology (IT)	Medium (1)	Internal Controls	Nil
Human Resources & Payroll	Medium (2) & Low (1)	Audit & Compliance	Critical (1) & Medium (1)

Based on the outcome of this assessment, NGDA was classified as a sub-contracted district, meaning it was eligible to receive funding directly from Global Communities to implement selected agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, WASH and good governance interventions. The assessment also detailed areas that the Assembly should proactively address, regardless of its classification, in order to build a more robust internal control system. To address these gaps, the Assembly undertook a number of steps, including training key personnel in PFM-related GOG laws, receiving mentorship and coaching from USAID and Global Communities RING in best practices, and putting in place internal measures and controls in line with GOG policies. By the close of the project, the Assembly had addressed 100% of its previously identified PFM risks. Some notable outcomes of these efforts include development of an electronic Fixed Asset Register, strengthened procurement function, preparation of Strategic IT Policy and Plan, establishment and training of an Audit Committee, and establishment of a budgetary control reporting system, among other things.

Throughout this process, the Assembly has identified a number of promising outcomes and lessons learned, including:

- Though cumbersome at times, adherence to GOG guidelines for public financial management results in prudent use of funds, ensuring transparency and accountability for all resources that are funneled through the Assembly.
- Effective teamwork and collaboration between implementing departments ensures timely delivery of public services through robust cash planning and timely liquidation reporting. Coordination between departments also ensures that cash requests are based on actual need, thereby reducing the instance of excess or insufficient cash (available at a time) to execute planned activities.

Based on these positive outcomes, the Assembly has identified several steps it can undertake to ensure that PFM gains remain institutionalized. Among the steps include enhancing the independence of the Internal Audit Units by making available a separate budget for field work and, as part of the IT Strategic Plan, implementing electronic record keeping and revenue data management systems to enhance IGF collection. The IT policy and strategy was fashioned in full anticipated of the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (an electronic funds management system designed to improve uniformity in accounting at all levels of government). More information on the activities the Assembly intends to continue beyond the life of the RING Project can be found in the [Sustainability Strategy](#) within this document.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Strengthening

Building on The Government of Ghana's increasing demand for the use of data in decision-making, under RING, the Assembly has made significant strides in its internal monitoring and evaluation systems. In addition to basic capacity building in monitoring activity implementation, reporting using standardized templates, and the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) to support development planning, the Assembly worked closely with the NRCC and the Global Communities RING technical team to systematize its approach for reporting data to the region and accessing that data for future analysis through the newly-established Northern Regional Management Information System (NORMIS).

To support these efforts, the region formed a core team to support down streamed trainings to the district-level. Each district now also has a number of trained user managers that can access the data and share it among departments for further analysis. The database was successfully launched in May 2019 and district teams were subsequently trained by the core regional team. Data entry is done in accordance with the Performance Indicator Reference Sheet, or PIRS, developed by the regional core team with input from some key Assembly staff. In line with the National Development Planning

Commission's (NDPC) mandate that all regions should consolidate district-level data for reporting to the national level, the indicators featured here are sourced from national data needs and region-specific needs. The PIRS developed for each indicator also includes information on data collection methodology and sources, and how often and when the data should be collected and reported on. To manage the data collated at the district level, the Assembly also established a basic Management Information Center, equipped with the requisite computers and storage software and hardware.

To ensure that this system is maintained by GOG beyond the life of the RING project, the North Gonja District Assembly, along with other Northern Region MMDAs, are exploring options to directly fund the annual subscription costs for the cloud-based storage system. In cooperation with other districts in the region, costs will be minimal and the investment worthwhile for long-term strengthening of internal monitoring and evaluation systems.

Lessons Learned and Areas for Opportunity

Throughout implementation of the RING Project, the Assembly has noted a number of areas that have had an impact on development programming in the district. These lessons learned have implications for how the Assembly carries out its day-to-day work and how it approaches future development efforts. Some of these lessons include, but are not limited to:

- *The role of leadership in implementation:* sustaining an engaged leadership at the Assembly is critical concerning the success of interventions in all sectors. The Chief Executive, as the highest level of authority in the Assembly, must have a solid grasp on programmatic themes and must be willing to regularly engage the implementation team, prioritize the release of funds, and closely monitor implementation and fiscal accountability. The Coordinating Director and Heads of Department also have a critical role in fostering success in implementation. In addition to managing their staff, they are tasked with monitoring progress to ensure timely implementation towards a successful completion, ensuring that officers receive funds to implement and are held accountable for results, and that delegation of efforts occurs, and reducing the emergence of bottlenecks.
- *Delegation of efforts:* in line with the above lesson learned, delegating activities on a large project such as RING must occur, otherwise individual staff who must also fulfil mandates in accordance with their GOG role may become overwhelmed with the responsibilities, particularly during seasons with time-sensitive efforts, and activity progress can stall. Therefore, engaging multiple technical team members in implementation and monitoring duties can help ease this burden, and also create a greater sense of ownership of the results by the department as a whole, rather than individuals.
- *Coordination between and within technical departments:* The RING project sought to holistically address the issues of poverty and malnutrition among the district's most vulnerable households. As such, a multi-faceted approach was adapted to planning and implementation. Over the life of the project, the level of coordination between the various technical units increased and improved, as both leadership and the implementation team noted its significance in ensuring that complex programming was successfully delivered. To this end, the Assembly instituted routine coordination meetings between implementing technical units, promoted joint implementation of cross-cutting activities (i.e. utilization trainings and gender or social protection-based community outreach), and encouraged sharing of information between and within implementing departments. As a result, technical knowledge and skills have expanded among Assembly staff, enabling all staff to speak more confidently to basic information in agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition, and WASH, no matter that officer's technical sector.

Next Steps: Sustaining Gains Made under RING

Upon review of the RING's progress over the life of the project, the Assembly has identified a number of areas as having high potential for development progress within the district, if continued. Additionally, there are some project efforts that the Assembly can build upon, taking the activity to the next level. In the following pages, there are a number of approaches, interventions, and strategies outlined that the Assembly has prioritized for implementation over the next several years. In some cases, the Assembly will have the funds or resources available to carry out the efforts, while in others, there will be a reliance on partnership with current or future development programs.

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Livelihoods	VSLA	Formation and Monitoring of new groups	sensitization of communities mobilization of members formation of groups establishment of group regulations training of various groups commencement of savings	1) Engage Dept. of Community Dev't to compare existing VSLA community locations to communities without registered VSLAs 2) Set clear criteria for group membership - any demographics targeted should be clearly communicated during community entry 3) Evaluate community response to note # of groups needed and begin engagements for leadership elections 4) Guide leadership	There are 135 groups in the district which are found in all 64 communities within the district, thus, 100% coverage. However, only 3865 benefit from the scheme.	30 MORE GROUOP WILL INCLUDE MALE GROUPS	8/1/2019-DEC-2020	Department of Community Development, with support from existing District VSLA team	L4Tool kits fuel for outreach activities, - lunch alliance , L4means of transport	30% of funds should come from IGF While 60% from DACF support the activities. With 10% from P4F&J

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
				through Constitution development and ratification process 5) Conduct training via district VSLA team 6) Follow established guidelines on VSLA rollout 7) Ensure VSLA implementation team MIS officer gets data on a monthly basis and updates accordingly						
Livelihoods	VSLA	Monitoring of existing groups	Asses the performance of all existing VSLA groups	Sitting arrangement at meetings, way of record keeping, and how fines are paid	There are 135 existing groups in the district	All the 135 VSLA groups	Aug-2019-dec-2020	Department of Community development	fuel for field officers	30% of funds should come from IGF While 60% from DACF support the activities. With 10% from P4F&J
Livelihoods	VSLA	Share out	Participate in all share outs programs	Identify groups that are due for share out and participate in the share out of all matured groups	All the 135 groups have done share outs before	All matured groups	Aug-2019-dec-2020	Community development and social welfare	Fuel and lunch allowance	IGF, DACF, and other donors
Livelihoods	VSLA	Re-evaluation of all VSLA groups in the district	To re-evaluate all the existing VSLA groups to find out those that are still going on with the best practices and	Weekly monitoring and observation of all groups to verify those that still maintained the best practices	All the 135 groups would be monitored	All 135 VSLA groups	Aug-2019-dec-2020	Community development and social welfare	Fuel and lunch allowance	IGF, DACF, and other donors

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
			those that are not more carrying on with the best practices	and those that have relapsed.						
Livelihoods	VSLA	Revolving fund for VSLA tool kits	VSLA groups are to use part of their social fund to pay for the tool kits provided to them so that those monies can be used to pay for the cost of tool kits for new groups formed	All new groups formed are to be made known about this initiative	Yet to be commenced	All newly formed groups	Aug-2019-dec-2020	Community development and social welfare	Fuel and lunch allowance	IGF, DACF, and other donors
Livelihoods	small ruminants	Vaccinations and other medications	The District Assembly intends to support the Agric Dept. to continuously Monitor and deliver veterinary services to small ruminants beneficiaries	Vet Officers will be required to monthly monitor and provide vet services to small ruminants beneficiaries	29 small ruminants communities	1093 Small ruminants beneficiaries	monthly from July 2019	Agric Department	Fuel , Medicines	IGF, GOG, District Assembly Common Fund
Agriculture	OFSP (Vine Multiplication & Community Use)	identifying interested communities /farmers in all three Area councils	sensitization of communities training of interested farmers who have access to water bodies. linking interested vine multipliers to suppliers of vines. linking groups /communities to vine multipliers	1.identify and support farmers ready to cultivate vine multiplication sites 2. Direct interested farmers in OFSP cultivation to the vine multiplication sites	Vine site at Nyankpala	Interested farmer in the district	July 2019 to December 2019	Agric Department	fuel , technical back stopping	IGF GOG /MAC

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Agriculture	crop support in Groundnut cultivation	monitoring	AEAs to continue to monitor and provide extension services to soya-beans cultivation communities	(1) Engage Agric Department to assign AEAs to Soya-beans communities to provide crop extension services.	16 communities within the district	16 communities	June 2019 to December 2021	Agric Department	fuel ,technical back stopping	IGF,GOG/MAC
Agriculture	LGV	identify interested groups in the district	provide technical support to support interested groups	identify groups that are ready to participate in LGV production support them with Technical services and facilities.	3 communities are provided with irrigation facilities	3 communities in the district	2019-2021	Agric Department	Motor bikes fuel	GOG and support from DACF / IGF/MAC
Nutrition	Technical Support Visits (District to Facility)	supervision of health activities in the facilities	Supportive Supervision, Coaching and mentoring of Health Staff	Integrating Nutrition activities into other health activities	The district has 2 TO nutrition officers to support front line health staff Frontline Health Staff capacities have been built in nutrition interventions	CHVs, mothers/caregivers as well as community members will be abreast with current nutrition issues	2019-2021	Ghana Health Services	Motor bikes fuel	GOG and support from DACF
Nutrition	Technical Support Visits (Facility to Community)	supervision of health activities in the facilities	Supervision, Coaching and mentoring of Health CHV	monthly meetings integrating QI into data validation meeting	there are QI Coaches and QI teams in the facilities	all 14 health facilities within the district (QI teams)	2019 - 2021	Ghana Health Services	Motor bikes fuel	GOG and support from DACF
Nutrition	Quality Improvement	Monthly meetings	Identification of gaps on indicators brainstorm on how to improve indicators	outreach activities home visits engagement of CHV	trained health staff and Volunteers on CMAM	All SAM cases in the district	2019 - 2021	Ghana Health Services	Motor bikes fuel	GOG and support from DACF
Nutrition	Management of SAM	Identification/searching for cases	Identification of SAM search for SAM cases	CWC activities Home visits OPD ,ANC	All health staff and CHV have been trained on IYCF	All mothers with children under 2yrs who are sick/ with feeding	2019 - 2021	Ghana Health Services	Motor bikes fuel	GOG and support from DACF

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
						problems and pregnant women				
Nutrition	Targeted counseling services	Infant and young child feeding(IYCF)	identification of Sick children under 2yrs and have feeding problems counselling of mothers of children under 2yrs who are having feeding problems.	Month visit by walking to nearby support groups during meeting days monthly visit during outreach services to far away support groups and community durbars	MTMSGs and FTFSGs are already established in the district. District and all sub districts have SAV District has a projector and a screen	Support groups facilitators. Support group members	2019 - 2021	Health	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation
Nutrition	Community Outreach (MTMSG-FTFSG-SAV)	Supportive Supervision to MTMSGs and FTFSGs Screening of SAV	provide technical support to support group facilitators Screening of SAV during ANC,CWC, Community gatherings	providing means of transport for and fuel for Officers	CLTS activities have been initiated 4 years in the district. 10 officers have also been trained on CLTS and are providing Technical services	5 communities	Feb-Dec 2019	EHO	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation/UNICEF/IDA
WASH	CLTS	Triggering of New Communities	community entry Data collections	organize durbars, meetings and durbars transect walks, Rapid Rural Appraisals sensitization sessions	LTS activities have been initiated 4 years in the district. 10 officer are so been trained on CLTS and are proving Technical services	5 communities	Feb-Dec 2020	EHO	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation
WASH	CLTS	Monitoring of Triggered OD Communities	Identification of Natural Leaders Training of Natural leaders Monitoring	organize durbars, meetings and durbars transect walks, Rapid Rural	the district has 8 communities declared as ODF	8 communities	2019-2021	EHO	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
				Appraisals sensitization sessions						
WASH	CLTS	ODF Achievements	Community assessment Verification of communities Declaration of ODF	organize regular visits and meetings with community members	the district has 8 communities declared as ODF	8communities	2019-2022	EHO	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation
WASH	CLTS	Post-ODF Monitoring	Regular visits to communities for monitoring	provide phones and phone credit to natural leaders	there are 40 natural leaders in the district that can be used to start the net working	8 communities		EHO	Means of transport and fuel	2% of DACF for sanitation
WASH	CLTS	Radio Discussion On CLTS	Drawing a Time Table for Radio Discussions	Lobby the Radio Station to allocate night sessions between 7-8pm for the Radio discussions	Radio Station recordings of previous discussions	64 communities	Quarterly	Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit	Human Resource,	IGF, COMMON FUND, UNICEF
WASH	Sensitization at Hand Washing Stations	Organize sensitization in all established Hand Washing station in public places and institutions	Organize sensitization in existing stations Encourage new HW stations ; schools, health facilities and markets	provision of fuel and means of transport provision of materials provision of technical back stopping	1. Existence of Hand Washing stations in some institutions in the district 2. EHD/DWD in the district	23	2019-2021	DWD/DHO	Means of transport and fuel cement, zinc, wood, labour and nails	2% of DACF/IGF for sanitation
Governance	Coordination Meetings	Organizing quarterly departmental meetings	a. Meeting every first week of a quarter of the year All head of departments meeting b. Reviewing the progress of all activities /interventions c. Identifying challenges and	1. Making available a time table /schedule 2. Writing invitation letters to all HODs two weeks before the meeting 3. providing the areas for discussions at	1. In accordance to LGS regulations. 2. DPCU basically holds a meeting in every quarter of the year to review departmental development	4 meetings should be held in a year	2019 - 2021	DPCU	Fuel and lunch allowance	DACF/IGF

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
			suggesting solutions	each meeting 4. reminding HODs two days before meeting	activities. 3. It is also to undertake comprehensive monitoring of all development projects within the district quarterly 4. writing of Quarterly Progress Reports (QPR) on all projects /interventions in the district					
Governance	Planning & Budget Forums	preparation of plans and Budget	a. Community needs assessments b. Review meetings with Stakeholder on MTDP/AAP/ACP c. Fee fixing Resolution d. Budget Hearing	1. Making available a time table /schedule 2. Writing invitation letters to all stakeholders before the meeting 3. provide a reminder to all stakeholders a day before the meeting. 4. provide an enabling enrolment for a participatory discussions	All three AC have been engaged in the various meetings for the preparation of ACP, AAP ,Fee fixing resolutions as well as Public and Budget Hearings	4 forum annually	July 2019- Dec 2020	DPCU	fuel and lunch allowance	1 Quarterly generated IGF 2 DACF
Governance	Citizen's Forums/Town Hall Meetings	organizing regular quarterly Area Council meetings	1. ICT units at ACs 2. Setting a day in every quarter for a meeting 3. Providing quarterly reports to assembly 4. Providing	Organize durbars, meetings and public forum in the District and Acs	2 public foras and 4 durbars have been organized in the various Area Councils , citizens interest is created for participation in	hold at least 4 public fora in a year	July 2019- n 2020	DPCU	Fuel and lunch allowance	IGF and DACF

Main Technical Area	Activity Selected	Sub-Activity	Action Points	Strategies to Carry out Action Points	Baseline Data/Existing Data used to Set Targets	Targets	Time-frame	MMDA Department/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
			monthly revenue reports to Assembly 5.Improving revenue mobilization		these fora to hold stakeholders accountable.					
Governance	Sub-Structure Strengthening	organize 2 public /Citizens forum	1. Ensure popular participation in development issues in the district 2. sensitizing /Educating the citizens on Government policy 3. Accounting to the people on the use of resources	sensitization of Stakeholders setting up a desk in each AC Training desk officers on gender planning activities organizing regular quarterly meetings	Gender based activities and planning is already ongoing. With most heads of departments trained on gender	3 area councils	2019-2020	DPCU	5%Quarterly generated AC IG	5%Quarterly generated AC IG

Annex I – RING Evidence-based Activity Menu (2018)

Activity	RING 2018 Agriculture and Livelihoods Activity Menu	RING Result
VSLA	Community level savings groups that build financial literacy, business skills, trust, and cohesion among members, provides access to small loans, and encourages economic growth and investments in income-generating activities.	Increased access to savings & credit among target households
OFSP	OFSP cultivation incorporating GAPs for vine and root production and consumption, with a priority on group or block style farming; vines will be distributed through the VSLA platform to existing groups who have prepared one half-acre plot for their group farm.	Increased availability of affordable, diverse foods throughout the year among target households
Soybean	Soybean cultivation on half-acre plot per beneficiary incorporating GAPs and integrated pest management for improved yields	Increased availability of affordable, diverse foods throughout the year among target households
LGV	Dry season farming of vegetables grown on 1,000 meters square plots using gravity fed drip irrigation systems; also includes support for OFSP vine multiplication and tuber production during the dry season	Increased availability of affordable, diverse foods throughout the year among target households
Small Ruminants	Sheep rearing & animal husbandry training for households on proper housing, feeding, disease control/recognition, and use of animal droppings for soil improvement; includes community livestock workers trained & equipped for community support	Increased diversification of income throughout the year among target households
Poultry	Provide basic business skills and production management training through the distribution of poultry (selected districts)	Increased diversification of income throughout the year among target households
Groundnut	Groundnut cultivation on half-acre plot per beneficiary incorporating GAPs and integrated pest management for improved yields (selected districts)	Increased availability of affordable, diverse foods throughout the year among target households
	RING 2018 Nutrition Activity Menu	RING Result
Health Facility Strengthening	Provide logistical support (fuel) and technical assistance for carrying out well-planned, high quality community outreach visits with emphasis on nutrition service delivery and improving routine data quality	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Cooking Demonstrations	Demonstrate utilization of locally-available foods to promote dietary diversity, timely and appropriate complementary feeding, and adequate maternal diet. Targets health facilities & strategically-identified communities and will not overlap with similar agriculture activities in soybean & OFSP cultivation.	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Integrated Mass Media Outreach	Promote social and behavior change to increase uptake of key agriculture, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene practices and services through mass media including video screening, road shows and community forums (e.g. durbars) Using The First 1000 Days concept and additional messages for children 2-5 years old.	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Technical Support Visits	Provide logistical support (fuel) for routine monitoring and Technical Supervision Visits to the DHMT and health workers to improve quality of services and provide on-site mentoring and coaching (using a checklist)	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Quality Improvement	Promote QI methods at the district and facility-levels to solve problems and bottlenecks around nutrition service delivery by supporting monthly QI team meetings, quarterly learning sessions, and annual harvest meetings	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
ENA Monitoring	Provide supportive monitoring, mentoring and coaching to non-health sector DA staff and community leaders previously trained on ENAs	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target HHs
Mother-to-Mother Support Groups	Establish MTMSG in RING target communities, overlapped with VSLAs, to promote improved nutrition for pregnant women and infant and young child feeding practices (The First 1000 Days)	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Father-to-Father Support Groups	Establish FTFSG in RING target communities including husbands of women in existing MTMSGs to promote improved nutrition for pregnant women and infant and young child feeding practices (The First 1000 Days)	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
Anemia Training	Develop skills base of health workers on anemia prevention and treatment, and of community health volunteers on anemia prevention with an emphasis on counseling <i>(available for selected districts with demonstrated low coverage thus far - template has been removed from work plan file, but can be re-included if district wishes to hold these trainings)</i>	Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households
	RING 2018 Water Access, Sanitation & Hygiene Activity Menu	RING Result

CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitation - takes the community through a number of steps geared toward the realization that open defecation leads to the consumption of human feces; the approach places high value on community members devising local solutions to sanitation needs. Sub-activities include triggering, monitoring, DICCS verifications and ODF durbars, as well as support for training and rewarding Natural Leaders and their integration into the Natural Leaders Network.	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors among target households and their communities
Natural Leaders Network under CLTS	Support for a maximum of 20 communities per district with 2 selected Natural Leaders coming from communities that have already achieved ODF status. This will include an additional intensive training session for the selected NLs, direct support to the NLs for logistical needs to visit their assigned community (maximum of 16 visits), monitoring support for the DA staff to assess performance and collect data on progress (i.e. latrines, tippy taps, and soak away pits constructed), and support for eventual ODF declaration. This activity will be tied heavily to district performance, with strict adherence to pilot protocols (i.e. no more than 2 NLs/community, only 1 community per pair of NLs, restricted time frame of 12 weeks).	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors among target households and their communities
Hand-Washing Stations for Strategic Institutions	Hand washing station installation in public institutions with high traffic from women of reproductive age and children under five (CHPS compounds, Health Centers, KGs and crèches) and supportive follow-up outreach	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors among target households and their communities
Institutional Latrine Rehabilitation	Funding for minor repairs to existing latrines in public institutions with high traffic from women of reproductive age and children under five (CHPS compounds, Health Centers, KGs and crèches)	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors among target households and their communities
Borehole & Livestock Watering Repairs	Rehabilitation of existing boreholes and reconstruction of separate livestock watering areas; should include supplementary training for WSMTs and PCTs, as well as community sensitization on proper borehole maintenance and usage; Area Mechanic trainings can be included on an as-needed basis.	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors among target households and their communities
RING 2018 Governance Activity Menu		RING Result
Monthly RING Team Coordination Meetings	District led meetings with representatives from the various technical units to discuss RING project progress and areas for collaboration or coordination.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition
Collaborative Planning & Budgeting Meetings	Stakeholder meetings (2 per year) to review RING progress and get input for plans for the coming year - should include key stakeholders and be open to the public.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition
Social Protection Outreach at the Community Level	Provision of logistical support to carry out community and HH visits and perform follow-up actions, as needed. These visits will center on ensuring households are linked with the appropriate social safety nets (NHIS, LEAP, SFP, etc.) and are linked to other supportive mechanisms, such as RING-supported VSLA (where possible), and monitored for positive health and nutrition outcomes (i.e. child health record book and immunization record reviews, growth chart monitoring, MUAC measurements, etc.). Will also support quarterly District Social Protection Committee Meetings and some community-level committee engagements.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition
PFM Strengthening	Review meetings to track PFM progress against risk mitigation plans. Activities must be tied to outstanding risk mitigation measures and weak areas identified in subsequent monitoring visits.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition
Gender Desk Officer Action Planning	Multi-step process which may include: appointing a Gender Desk Officer, reviewing existing work plans, and allocating funding for the implementation of GDO activities.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition
District Sub-Structure Strengthening	Strengthening of Area/Zonal/Town Councils by providing logistical support for regular meetings. Additional capacity building training on Local Economic Development will be offered, building upon trainings that were conducted during the first phase of the rollout.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition & livelihoods
Citizens Forums	Community forums with emphasis on sharing info with the public, seeking feedback on various issues, and making decisions that may affect the community/district. Prioritization will be on making meetings more effective	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to Community

	and efficient, ensuring agendas are set according to GOG guidelines and that follow-up actions occur.	priorities for improved nutrition
Community Action Planning (CAP)	Activity will be limited to districts with currently low CAPs coverage of RING communities. Districts with high CAPs coverage may opt to develop Area Council Action Plans, which will support and be integrated with sub-structure strengthening efforts, in line with NDPC guidelines. All plans will feature an emphasis on including input from vulnerable groups (young women, PWDs, elderly, etc.) on practical activities they can undertake with the DA related to livelihoods, nutrition and WASH. <i>[Activity limited to those districts with <50% coverage of CAPs in RING communities - for those achieving more than 50% coverage, the focus will be on Area Action Plans, under the Sub-Structure Strengthening Activity]</i>	Strengthened capacity of target communities to integrate nutrition and livelihood priorities
Establishment of Management Information Center within the District Registry	Activity provides logistical support to outfit an existing space at the Assembly, as well as capacity building training for the managing officer, to maintain and analyze district records related to activity implementation, monitoring, and results of interventions. Recommended logistics are a desk top computer, with a printer-copier-scanner, a tablet/strong smart phone for the managing officer, a desk and chairs, and some shelves and filing cabinets. Final recommendations on the specifications are forthcoming from the, but GC RING recommends each district blocks off GHs 10,000 from their 2018 budget to ensure they have enough funds to set up the office.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition & livelihoods
Coordinated Monitoring Visits by DPCU	Joint monitoring conducted by members of various technical units and district leadership, limited to two visits per year as general monitoring is incorporated into all other interventions.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition & livelihoods
District Logistical Support & Management	Consolidated activity for recurring expenditures that support all units in general project implementation. Will include vehicle maintenance, phone & internet credit, and the purchase of office equipment, stationery, and motorbikes (as justified by detailed distribution plan and up-to-date Fixed Asset Register)	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition & livelihoods



Photo: repaired borehole providing clean water for the community

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Disclaimer: this report was compiled with data from the RING Project and experiences by the North Gonja District Assembly as of June 2019 and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the US Government.

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