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



Saboba District Assembly

RING Project Journal

Partnership with the Resiliency in Northern Ghana Project

Since 2014, the USAID-funded Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Project has worked in partnership with Saboba District Assembly 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
MOGCSPP	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: Discussion occurring among VSLA members who are also LEAP beneficiary households within the Saboba District

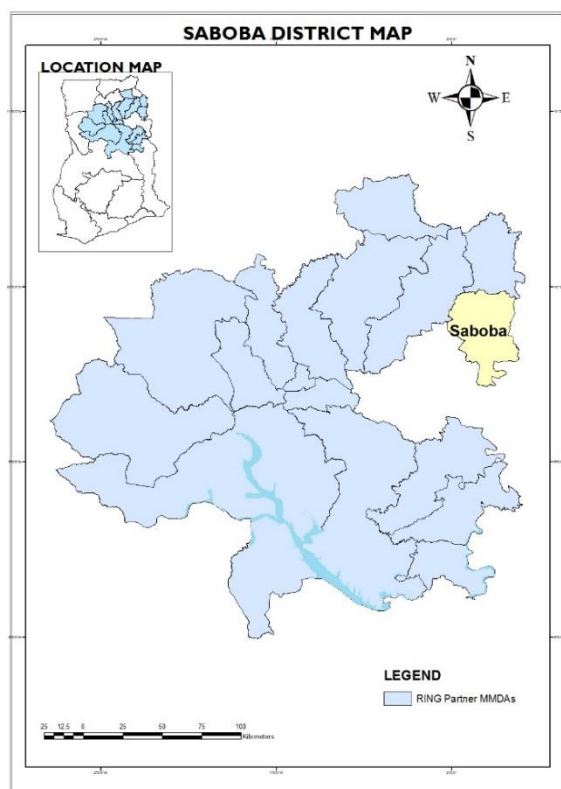
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Overview of the RING Project

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



Saboba is one of the 17 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA) that partnered with the RING project. Saboba District comprises mainly rural communities, with large swaths of arable land. The average household size throughout the district is 6.9 (roughly 11.5% lower than the regional average of 7.8¹) and there is a total population of approximately 65,700 people in the 254 communities². People in this district typically engage in agriculture as their main source of income, with the primary crops being yam, cassava, groundnut, and sorghum. The district has a poverty prevalence of 31.5%, with an average daily

per capita expenditure of USD 2.59.

Since 2014, the district partnered with the RING project to reach nearly 10,000 people with a number of nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods, good governance, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions. These

¹Ghana National Census, 2012

²Saboba District Medium Term Development Plan (2014 – 2017)

Cumulative Project Results

1,733

Communities Reached

123,209

Individuals Directly Benefiting

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

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

Saboba District Life of Project Results

158

Communities Reached

9,969

Individuals Directly Benefiting

**GHS 7.34M/
US\$ 2.02M**

RING Direct Funding Support Allocated to Saboba District Assembly

interventions were based at the household, community, and sub-district level, and all worked 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 Saboba 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.

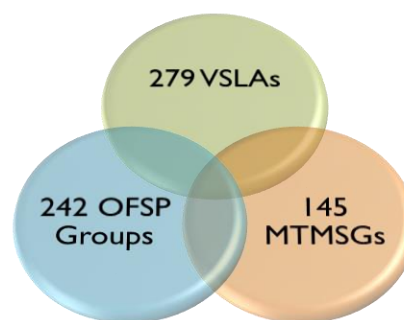


Figure 1 Summary of Strategic Layering of Interventions within Saboba District

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, 51.9% of those VSLAs were reached with MTMSG and 86.7% 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.

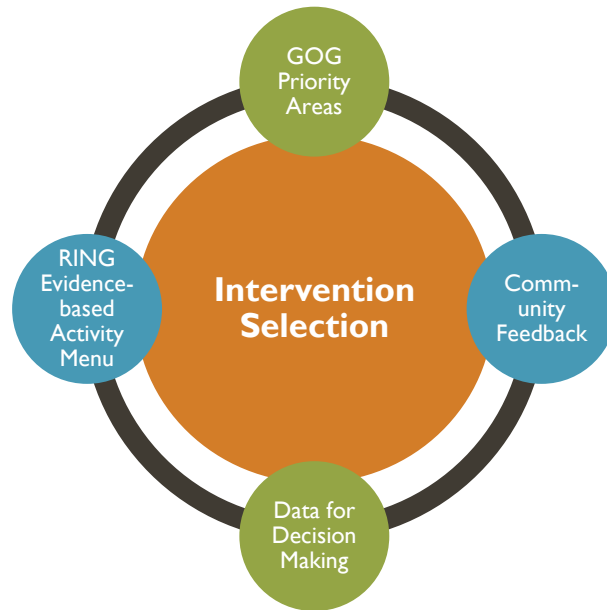


Figure 3 Priority areas for the Assembly during selection of interventions implemented via the RING Project

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 Activities Overviews

USAID RING Agriculture and Livelihoods interventions in the Saboba 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, through its staff, 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), and 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) and the small ruminant and shea collection and market linkages interventions were also identified as alternative livelihoods interventions reached out to beneficiaries as part of supporting build 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 life of the project.

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 Saboba Budget Officer, the district began Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) activity implementation in 2014. Since then, the 284 VSLAs formed across the 160 communities have operated consistently and, as a result, the 7,823 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 Saboba 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	29	57	1570	223,875	113127	240225	N/A	N/A	N/A
2018	13	20	571	114029	45860	144029	N/A	N/A	N/A
2017	72	124	3340	465,967	187,629	464424	31,575	4	75
2016	15	30	905	115565	48416	128175	72984	17	431
2015	17	30	853	266069	281826	329414	62586	10	283
2014	14	23	584	202811	304001	212057	18797	6	151
Total	160	284	7,823	1,388,316	980,859	1,518,324	104,559	21	506

Over the life of the RING project, the 284 groups formed saved a cumulative total of GHS 1.5M and loaned over GHS 980,859, with an average of GHS 194 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. There are a number of other areas related to VSLA that the district intends to sustain, which can be found in the [Sustainability Strategy](#) within this document.

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 Saboba 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), Saboba 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 146 communities and 6,533 farmers to cultivate 143 acres of land. Over 2,303,943 vines were distributed through this effort. Subsequently, 264 MT of OFSP roots were harvested, an average of 1.9 MT per acre. The table below provides a year by year performance summary for Saboba 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	111	5,289	1,817,000	108.5	193,191	1,780.56
2017			421,060.4	29.2	55,717.2	1,908.12
2016			61,700	5	12,315	2,677.17
2015			4,182.2	0.38	3,060	8,052.63
Totals	146	6,533	2,303,943	143	264,283.2	1,852.28

In comparison to other RING districts also cultivating OFSP, the district fared well, resulting in a 5% higher yield per acre average, compared to the other districts' 1.77MT per acre. A number of factors accounted for these low/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. Establishment of district-level DVMs should ease some of the associated challenges mentioned.

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 manner 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.

Based on the modest gains made in getting communities to accept the intervention under RING, the following key areas have been identified by the Assembly to continue after the close of the project, including provision of extension services and identification and training of OFSP focal farmers to lead in the OFSP vine multiplication and OFSP utilization training for beneficiaries. For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) found at the end of the document.

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 labor 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.

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.

Over the lifetime of the project, Saboba District Assembly engaged 83 communities and 1,986 farmers to cultivate 1,744.5 acres of land. This resulted in 705 MT harvested, an average of 404 kg/acre.

Table 3 District Soybeans Performance Summary

Year	# Comm'ties	# of Farmers	# of Acres Cultivated	Qty Harvested (KG)	Average Yield/ Acre (KG)
2018	29	1,371	673	257,626.8	383
2017	N/A	N/A	280.5	131,206.5	468
2016	N/A	N/A	551	243,822.1	443
2015	N/A	N/A	240	72,875	304
Totals	83	1,986	1,744.5	705,530.4	404

Though the results fell short of the 772 kg per acre average of the Northern Region³, it was still within the RING target of 400 kg/acre. This is especially positive news as one must consider that, under RING, households were not encouraged to use chemicals such as fertilizer or pesticides. This was both due to

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

costs and hazards associated with potential inappropriate application 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 USG 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).

Based on the outcome of efforts under the partnership with RING, the Assembly has identified a number of key areas it wishes to continue after the close of the project, including continued provision of extension services, continued training on post-harvest management and storage through the use of PICS as well soybeans utilization. For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) found at the end of the document.

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 2017. The interest was based on positive feedback from other districts that began the effort in 2015 & 2016. 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, Saboba engaged 19 communities and 500 farmers with support to install 37 drip irrigation kits. This resulted in 8.8 acres of land under cultivation and ultimately more than 18,719 kgs of greens harvested. The average performance reflected 2,122.34 kg harvested per acre, which was a high in comparison to the 564 kg/acre averaged by other RING districts undertaking the intervention. This can be attributed to early starts in implementation and solid rainfall the previous year, reducing the instances of water bodies drying up prematurely.

Overall, women engaged in the intervention were quite enthusiastic about the effort. Over the life of the project, households consumed over 5,905 kgs of leafy green vegetables and sold 12,816 kgs, resulting in profits for GHS 18,607. 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)
2019	3	61	6	1.5	1,397	167	1,232	2,465
2018	11	339	26	6.7	16,962	5,527	11,435	16,142
2017	5	100	5	0.62	360	211	149	-
Totals	19	500	37	8.82	18,719	5,905	12,816	18,607

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.

Based on the modest gains made from the efforts under RING, the Assembly has identified a number of key areas it wishes to continue after the close of the project, including continued regular monitoring and also provision of technical support to beneficiaries. For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) found at the end of the document.

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.

Small Ruminants Activity Summary (cont'd)

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.

Saboba District Assembly began implementation of the small ruminant intervention in 2014 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 65 communities and 1,449 women in the provision of 4,357 small ruminants (this included ewes to each household and a number of healthy rams for each CLW). Of those provided, households reported selling 40 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 an appreciable 11%, while mortality rates were 1%, representing 11% decrease in herd size. The Assembly's performance is low in comparison to other RING

District Performance Summary

Since 2014:

- 65 communities reached
- 1,449 farmers supported
- 4,357 sheep distributed
- 11% lambing rate
- 1% mortalities
- 40 animals sold
- 11% decrease in herd size

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 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
	65	1,449	4,357

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.

Based on the small ruminant efforts under RING, the Assembly has identified a number of key areas it wishes to continue after the close of the project, including continued provision of extension services for veterinary care including vaccination of small ruminants against PPR and Anthrax and training of beneficiaries on improved housing and maintenance, disease control and recognition, and supplementary

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

Shea Collection and Market Linkages

Shea Collection & Market Linkages Activity Summary

Training: training under shea collection focuses on quality control for nuts, emphasizing picking the nuts at the appropriate time, and then drying and storing them appropriately, all in an effort to maintain a high-quality stock, which will fetch premium market prices during sales periods.

Follow-Up Support: once the groups are trained, the district meets with them regularly throughout the shea picking season, then again during the sales period to ensure households are informed and ready for the buyers to come to weigh and purchase the quality nuts. The district team engages regularly with the women regarding market prices before they collectively select a buyer and negotiate a fair trade.

Phase-Out Strategy: shea collection support lasts approximately two years. During the first year, the women are provided training, inputs (i.e. boots, gloves, basins, storage sacks), and linked directly with potential buyers. During the second year, the district still acts as an intermediary between the women’s groups and the buyers. By the third year, the relationship between the groups and the buyers have been well-established and the district will no longer need to maintain regular contact.

Saboba District Assembly began implementation of the shea collection and market linkages intervention in 2017 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 2 communities and 94 women in collection and sale of shea nuts. Beneficiaries report collecting 46,700 kgs/bags of shea nuts out of which 17,700 kgs/bags were sold to aggregators, which were members of Shea Network Ghana or the Global Shea Alliance (a consortium of domestic and international buyers committed to Fair Trade principles). The women drew in GHS 13,350 collectively from the sale of the nuts and those profits were then used to address 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.

Table 6 District Shea collection Performance Summary

Cumulative Totals	Communities Reached	Households Supported	Shea nuts collected (KG)	Shea nuts sold (KG)	Profits (GHs)
	2	94	46,700	17,700	13,350

Through engaging with the community groups and providing routine supportive monitoring during strategic periods of the season, the Assembly noted 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 is critical to guide the women to the point of successful bulk sales; and
- Engaging women in VSLA activities provides a line of credit that reduces the women's tendency to sell off portions of their collection before the main sale takes place, as well as increases group cohesion and the likelihood that the group members will collectively agree to the details of the aggregated sales.

Nutrition Activity Overviews

Through the Assembly's partnership with the RING Project, the Saboba 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, Saboba 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 summarizes capacity building achievements in the above-mentioned areas since the project start in 2014.

Saboba	CMAM	CIYCF	ANEMIA	MTMSG Facilitators	#MTMSG LOP	FTFSG-HW	ENA	SAV Lessons	SAV-Dissemination	Commodity Mngt.	Outreach Pl.	Data U	QI	Integrated Comm. Eng
HW	100	55	189			5		49		54	88	26	167	
CHV	223	110	307			5								
Non-HW/Participants				357	145	15	187		2945					24440

Figure 4 Summary of Nutrition Capacity Building Efforts for HWs and CHVs over LOP

Capacity Building for Health Workers

CMAM: RING provided support for the Saboba 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, 100 (49%) 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) records and district annual reports, this has led to a decrease in CMAM case load from 14.7% in 2014 to 2.4% in 2019, while defaulter rates decreased from 12% in 2014 to 1.6% 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. Fifty-five (55) HWs (35 men and 20 women) were targeted and trained, representing 47% 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. Underweight amongst CU5s also reduced from 8.1% in 2014 to 3.9% 2019 (district second quarter report and DHIMS).

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 189 (74%) 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 74% 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. This has led to an increase in hemoglobin testing for pregnant women from 13% in 2014 to 84% in 2018, per district annual reports and the DHIMS.

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 187 non-health workers including, School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Teachers, Traditional Birth Attendants/CHVs, and Health workers 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. The Saboba District continued to make use of this interplay with support from the RING and trained a total of 223 (73%) CHVs on CMAM, 110 (85 men, 25 women) on CIYCF, and 307 (224 men, 83 women) on APC; these CHVs represented 210 total communities. These capacity building efforts equipped CHVs to better integrate essential messages into MTMSG discussions and community household 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 85% 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 88 (43%) health staff on outreach planning services and 26 (13%) HW on data utilization, while an additional 45 (22%) HWs were trained on a combined model, 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 Saboba District Health Administration (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 7 key DHA staff as QI Coaches to enable them provide technical support to all 26 health facilities implementing the activity. 26 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 26 QI teams with 134 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 46 team meetings, 72 coaching visits, and conducted 4 peer learning sessions and one harvest meeting in support of the 36 facility teams. The QI approach has made progress as currently 30 of 36 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.

Based on successful implementation of the QI approach, the district team, voluntarily formed and trained 10 extra teams without financial support from the GC RING project and increases the number of teams from 26 to 36 within the district.

Health Systems Strengthening: Commodity Management

GHS through RING embarked on a new strategy to train staff in commodity management on-the-job. 54 staff from the district's 36 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 24,440 people from 320 communities with various levels of utilization trainings and durbar-based outreach.**

Community Engagement: Mother to Mother Support Groups

The district, with RING support, trained 357 MTMSG Facilitators, to then support formation of 145 MTMSGs across 101 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 2 senior health staff and 5 community HWs to lead FTMSG Facilitators training. Twenty (20) 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 sessions have 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, the progress noted in key activities, and the priorities of the communities, district and national GHS, the district has identified the following areas to focus on beyond the life of RING:

1. Based on improvements recorded across thematic areas due to efforts of routine technical support visits, the Saboba 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, 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 pages contain a summary of achievements, lessons learned and ongoing WASH efforts within the district.

Community-Led Total Sanitation

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Activity Summary

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

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) (cont'd)

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.

Saboba District Assembly began CLTS implementation in 2014, but it was not until 2016 and 2017 when significant progress in open defecation free (ODF) certified community achievements began. This coincided with the partnership with Global Communities RING increasing the size of the technical team by including CLTS Facilitators (short-term external staff hired to support expansion of CLTS efforts) and establishment of 2 Natural Leaders Networks (NLN). As a result, the Assembly has triggered 60 communities for CLTS since 2014. Within that, 242 Natural Leaders were trained to support construction of 1,156 household latrines and 903 tippy taps, providing safe sanitation access to 9,132 people in those communities. The district has also converted 33 of the 60 triggered communities to ODFs, representing a 55% conversion rate and a higher rate of conversion than the regional and national averages.

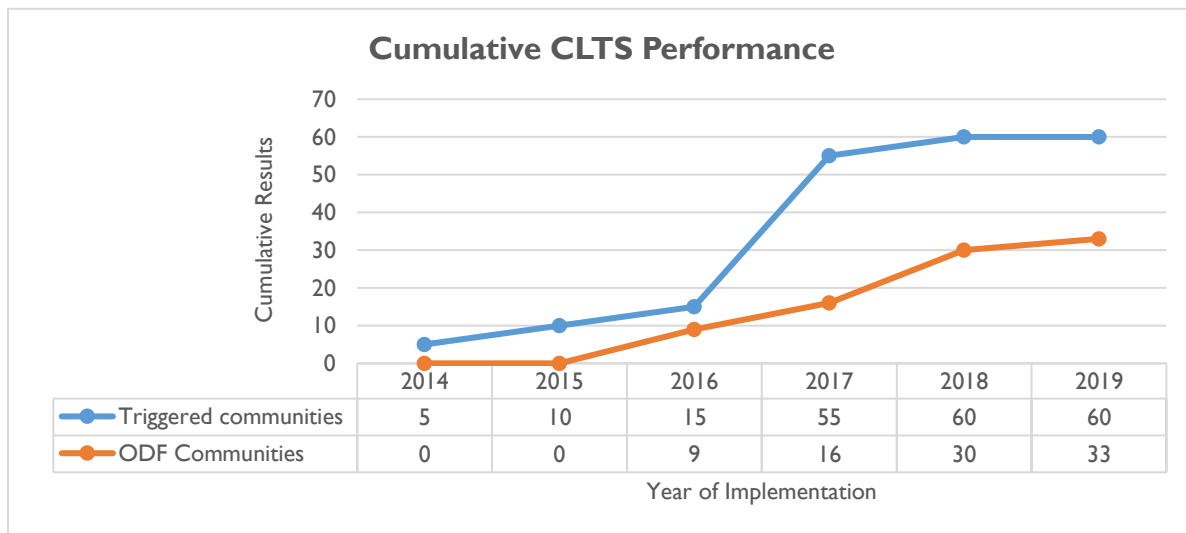


Figure 5 CLTS Performance Summary over Project LOP (2014-2019)

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

- Natural Leaders are capable of leading CLTS efforts and influencing neighboring communities to attain ODF status, if their capacities are enhanced.
- ODF attainment requires dynamic and supportive community leadership. Where leadership is effective, the duration for ODF achievement is shorter and the vice versa.

Moving forward, the under listed are the activities earmarked to be continued by the Saboba District Assembly after the RING project phases out in September 2019.

- Monitoring and providing support to ODF communities to push them up the Sanitation Ladder and prevent them from relapsing.
- Triggering of new communities and continuous support to OD communities with the Assembly's own IGF.
- Establishment of Natural Leaders Network to ensure that CLTS communities continue to receive technical support, even if district staff are unable to visit the communities.

For more information on CLTS activities to be sustained beyond the life of the RING project, please refer to the [Sustainability Strategy](#) within this document.

Borehole Rehabilitation, including WSMTs and Area Mechanic Training

Borehole Repairs Activity Summary

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 district to repair 70 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 Saboba, 12 WSMTs and 9 Area Mechanics were trained. Each borehole provides an average of 300 people with access to potable water, meaning 12,000 people from 62 communities benefitted from this intervention.

To ensure that water provided by the repaired boreholes met benchmarks for water quality, 20 samples were taken between 2017 and 2018 and submitted to Ghana Water Company Limited for testing. Of those, 8 were found to have excessive bacteria counts and required remedial measures, such as flushing and disinfection. The affected boreholes were completely flushed and disinfected.

Over the course of implementation, the Saboba 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 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.

Moving forward, the district intends to continue mobilization and training of WSMTs and pump caretakers as well as monitoring of hand pump functionality and WSMT performance. Further related efforts can be found in the district's [Sustainability Strategy](#) at the end of this document.

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.

Throughout the life of the RING Project, Saboba Assembly installed 40 hand washing stations in 40 basic schools. 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 and school children took turns to practice washing their hands with soap.

To ensure that the hand washing stations contained water 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, reducing 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.

Going forward, the district intends to infuse monitoring of hand washing with soap into their general monitoring, which is done on quarterly basis. In that case, no separate budget is required to sustain the intervention. In collaboration, with other partners, the district has intentions of furthering the activity implementation in many other schools and health facilities.

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 Efforts under RING

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 & 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.

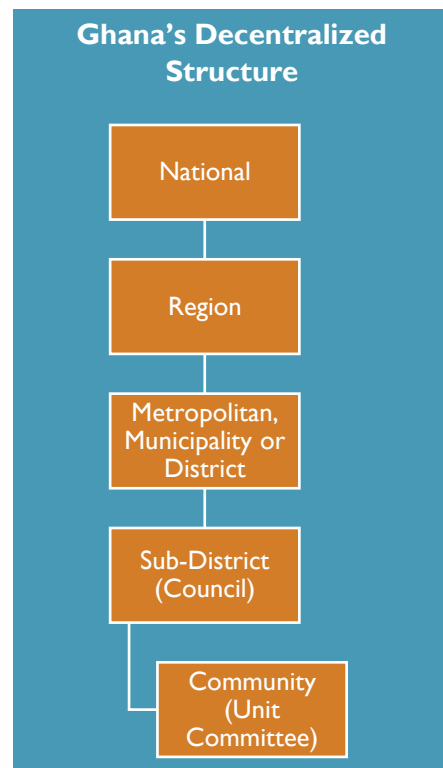
Types of Activities: outreach can be done in a larger groups setting or with more targeted individuals, but main purpose remains the same – information must be shared between the community and the Assembly, ideally with the Council acting as a conduit. Efforts the Assembly has undertaken include the 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 Saboba District Assembly has four Area/Town Councils to represent its 254 communities. Under RING, sub-structure strengthening efforts began in 2016 with 2 Area Councils. Training of Council representatives on their roles and responsibilities took place in 2016 and 2017 with LED training occurring in 2018/2019. To date, 3 of the 4 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 75 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 12 Citizens Forums, open meetings that allow the sub-structure and 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 such as planning and budgeting forums 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.

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, Saboba District Assembly developed their Gender Desk Officer Action plan. Over the life of the project, the district has reached 81 communities through gender outreach efforts, such as reducing women's time burden, increasing women's participation in governance, and increasing women's decision-making and control and access to resources, among others, reaching a total of 4,273 community members. After these sensitizations community members are encouraged to take action steps to address these issues, some have decided to take steps including: the men agreeing to help the wives in household chores, like bathing the children, fetching water or washing dishes, among other. Often men also agreed to support the women to carry load from the farms to the home or the market. Additionally, families decided to have boys help the girls in their house chores, like fetching firewood.

In regards to the access and control to resources sensitization for women, community members decided to lease good land for women to farm. In some communities', members were also ready to support their wives to own and control home assets or resources, although some men were still adamant that the men should control assets, as tradition dictates. The district team believes that through consistent follow-up sensitizations, they will change these perceptions over time.

Another interesting learning came during the increasing women' participation in governance and leadership sensitizations, the Saboba Assembly team realized that some men didn't want to give their wives the opportunity to attend meetings, because they didn't want the women to take on any leadership roles. However, during the sensitizations, the men realized both the importance and benefits of having women

participate in meetings and take on leadership positions. They declared that they were willing to give support to any women interested in participating in these events. Saboba district also decided to form a Gender Support Network and has identified the various network members. The Assembly team is currently working to launch their GSN to coordinate gender efforts in the district.

In the Assembly's experience working with the communities to mainstream gender and address gender gaps, the GDO with the support from the DPCU have taken note of several lessons learning, including:

- The need for a GSN that will give a voice to gender in the districts, and improved collaboration on gender efforts between decentralized departments and civil sector stakeholders.
- The need for 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 GDO Action Plans.

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

- Sensitizations and monitoring of beneficiaries to keep communities actively engaged in addressing gender inequities.
- To start a GSN and hold regular meetings for effective coordination of gender efforts in the district.

For more information on the upcoming plans, please review the district's Sustainability Strategy found at the end of the 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, Saboba 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 July 2018) has also supported formation of 18 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 Saboba Assembly also conducted community outreach, sensitizing the citizenry on such relevant topics as child right, child marriage, and teenage pregnancy and school dropout, among others. Communities reported taking action steps like educating other community members in order to in order to address issues of child trafficking and *kayayei* in their communities.

District Performance Summary

Since 2016:

Household Monitoring:

- 3,120 LEAP beneficiaries monitored
- Number of people linked to:
 - NHIS registration or renewal – 1,640
 - Birth and Death Registration – 26

Community Outreach:

- 16 sensitizations carried out in 16 communities, reaching 903 people

DSPC (inaugurated in 2018)

- 24 members (16 men, 8 women)
- 3 Meetings held

CSPC

- 18 CSPCs formed in 20 communities
- 261 members

LEAP VSLAs

- 70 LEAP VSLAs formed in 56 communities with 2,030 members
- GHS 95,800 saved and GHS 6,800 loaned by LEAP VSLA members

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, 2,030 people have been linked to VSLAs in 56 communities. Results from their first year of implementation show that GHS 95,800 has been saved and GHS 6,800 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.

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.
- LEAP focal persons are key in monitoring implementation of LEAP VSLA at their communities.

Based on the success of the efforts under RING, Saboba 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.
- Training of Focal persons to undertake regular monitoring at the community level regularly.

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 GC, Saboba District Assembly (SDA) 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

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

Table 7 Summary of PFM Risk Assessment Findings Pre-Project Implementation

PFM Thematic Area	Risk Levels (# of Risks)	PFM Thematic Area	Risk Levels (# of Risks)
Budget Planning & Execution	High (1) & Low (1)	Cash Management & Treasury	Nil
Procurement	Medium (5)	Accounting & Reporting	Medium (1)
Information Technology (IT)	High (1)	Internal Controls	High (1) & Medium (1)
Human Resources & Payroll	High (1) & Low (3)	Audit & Compliance	Critical (1), High (1) & Medium (1)

Based on the outcome of this assessment, the Saboba District Assembly was classified as a directly funded or G2G district, meaning it was eligible to receive funding directly from USAID 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. In the past three years, the Assembly has also performed well in external audits with no significant findings for years 2015 to 2017 (*source: Auditor- General Report*).

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 Saboba 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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Livelihoods	VSLA	Monitoring of Existing VSLAs	Continuation of share purchases, and Entry of group data into the SAVIX database	Assign field officers to communities and groups. Ensure VSLA implementation team MIS officer gets data on a monthly basis and updates accordingly	218 VSLA groups in the district (5,412 making 6% of the district total population)	6% of the total population participate in VSLA.	August 2019-July 2020	Community Development, with support from existing District VSLA team	fuel for monitoring. Ghc 4000.00 per month* 12(ghc48,939) Phone credit for collection of data for updating SAVIX ghc 50.00 per month (Ghc 600.00) servicing of 2 motor bikes 400 per month * 12 (Ghc4,800)	DACF 60 % IGF 40%. The team has a laptop
Livelihoods	VSLA	Development of District VSLA Catalog	Collect data from the field and Entry of group data into the SAVIX database	Assign field officers to communities and groups. Ensure VSLA implementation team MIS officer gets data on a monthly basis and updates accordingly	218 district VSLA plus 100 LEAP VSLAs (6,892 making 8 % of the district total population)	8% of the total population participate in VSLA.	August 2019-July 2020	Community Development, with support from existing District VSLA team	included in the above	DACF 60 % IGF 40%. The team has a laptop
Livelihoods	VSLA	MMDA Participation in Share Out Events	Commencement of share purchases, Collect data from the field and Entry of group data into the SAVIX database	Assign field officers to communities and groups. Ensure VSLA implementation team MIS officer gets data on a monthly basis and updates accordingly	218(5,412) district VSLA plus 100(1,480)LEAP VSLAs (6,892 making 8 % of the district total population)	6% of the total population participate in VSLA.	August 2019-July 2020	Community Development, with support from existing District VSLA team	same	DACF 60 % IGF 40%. The team has a laptop

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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Agriculture	Small ruminants	Training of beneficiaries on Improved Housing and Maintenance, Disease control and Recognition, Supplementary feeding	1) Community selection 2) Selection of beneficiaries 3) Training of beneficiaries	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) Staff of Veterinary services will carry out the training	10 Small ruminants beneficiary communities (approximately 500 beneficiaries) from 2014 and 2015 year groups.	50% of 2014 and 2015 batch of small ruminant beneficiaries will be trained	February 2020- March 2020	DADU	1) GHC 520.00 to purchase fuel for community selection 2) GHC 520.00 to purchase fuel for beneficiary training 3) GHC 220.00 for lunch	DACF, MAG and IGF
Agriculture	Small ruminants	Vaccination of small ruminants against PPR and Anthrax	1) Community selection 2) Selection of beneficiaries 3) Vaccination of small ruminants	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) Staff of Veterinary services will carry out the vaccinations	10 Small ruminants beneficiary communities (approximately 500 beneficiaries) from 2014 and 2015 year groups.	40% of small ruminants from 2014 and 2015 year group will be vaccinated against PPR and Anthrax	May 2020- November 2020	DADU	1) GHC 9,000.00 to purchase PPR vaccine and Anthrax spore vaccine 2) GHC 2,200.00 to purchase fuel for vaccination 3) GHC 1,200.00 for lunch for officers carrying out vaccination	DACF, MAG and IGF
Agriculture	Crop Support: OFSP	Training on OFSP vines multiplication	1) Selection of communities 2) Selection of VLSA groups 3. Identification of OFSP focal farmers to lead in the OFSP vine multiplication for beneficiaries 4) Site selection and Land preparation training 5) Cutting, Planting and field care training 6) Monitoring	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) Involve chiefs and opinion leaders in the site selections. 4) AEAs will lead beneficiaries in the vine multiplication. 5. Link the beneficiaries to the OFSP focal farmers to supply them the vines	5 VLSA groups (representing approximately 150) beneficiaries	150 OFSP beneficiaries will be trained on OFSP vine multiplication	January 2020- February 2020	DADU	1) GHC 420.00 to purchase fuel for community and group selection 2) GHC 1,100.00 for land preparation training 3) GHC 1,100.00 for cutting, planting and field care training	DACF, MAG and 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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Agriculture	Crop Support: OFSP	Training on OFSP utilization	1) Selection of communities 2) Selection of VLSA groups 3) Purchase of ingredients 4) Training of beneficiaries	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) Nutrition team and Gender officer will be involved in the activity to educate beneficiaries on nutrition and gender respectively. 4) AEAs will lead beneficiaries in the activity. 6. Beneficiaries sometimes will be required to contribute some ingredients to support in the utilizations.	20 VSLA groups (representing approximately 600) beneficiaries	600 OFSP beneficiaries will be trained on OFSP utilization	September 2020- December 2020	DADU	1) GHC 473.00 to purchase fuel for officers 2) GHC 880.00 to purchase lunch for officers 3) GHC 3,000.00 to purchase ingredients for utilization training	DACF, MAG and IGF
Agriculture	Crop Support: Soybeans	Training on the use of PICS	1) Selection of communities 2) Selection of beneficiaries 3) Training / demonstration on proper use of PICS 4. Identify the agro/ PICCS dealers	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) AEAs will carry out the trainings. Link farmers to the PICCS dealers for purchase	20 VSLA groups cultivating soybeans (with about 600 beneficiaries)	600 beneficiaries from VSLA groups will be trained on the use of PICS for soybeans storage	August 2020- September 2020	DADU	1) GHC 473.00 to purchase fuel for officers 2) GHC 880.00 to purchase lunch for officers	DACF, MAG and IGF
Agriculture	Crop Support: Soybeans	Training on soybeans utilization	1) Selection of communities 2) Selection of beneficiaries 3) Training of beneficiaries	1) Engage staff of Agric. Department in selecting communities and beneficiaries 2) Agric Department will collaborate with District Assembly to ensure the success of the activity. 3) Nutrition team and Gender officer will be involved in the activity to educate beneficiaries on nutrition and gender	20 VSLA groups cultivating soybeans (with about 600 beneficiaries)	600 beneficiaries from VSLA groups will be trained on soybeans utilization	October 2020- December 2020	DADU	1) GHC 473.00 to purchase fuel for officers 2) GHC 880.00 to purchase lunch for officers 3) GHC 3,000.00 to purchase ingredients for utilization training	DACF, MAG and 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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
				respectively. 4) AEAs will lead beneficiaries in the activity. 5. Beneficiaries sometimes will be required to contribute some ingredients to support in the utilisations						
Agriculture	Leafy Green Vegetables	Monitoring of sites and technical support	1) Community selection 2) Selection of beneficiaries 3) Training of beneficiaries	1) Staff of Agric. Department will carry out regular monitoring and also provide technical support to beneficiaries.	200 beneficiaries from 10 LGVs communities	50 monitoring visits will be carried out	January 2020-June 2020	DADU	1) GHC 1,182.50 to purchase fuel for officers 2) GHC 1,100.00 to purchase lunch for officers	DACF, MAG and IGF
Nutrition	Technical Support Visits (District to Facility)	Technical Support Visits from District to facility level	Use the integrated nutrition checklist developed by the RHD for effective supportive supervision (SS) at the facility level. The checklist is comprehensive, user friendly and allows staff to provide targeted feedback to health workers. Our monitoring team have been using this checklist and familiar with it. It provide feedback and helps to build staff capacity on the job in the respective thematic areas	The MDHS to provide fuel by using IGF to conduct activity, Integrate activity with quarterly integrated monitoring.	Conduct the monitoring visits to all our 16 health facilities	Visits all the 16 health facilities	Quarterly	Municipal Health Directorate (Nutrition, Public Health, Disease Control , Health information, Promotion Units)	6,000Fuel and field perdiem	Use IGF or fund that may accrue from the Resiliency Conference Hall to conduct this activity.

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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Nutrition	Technical Support Visits (Facility to Community)	Technical Support Visits from Facility to Community level.	1. Identify all the active Community Health Volunteers at the community, Capacity of CHVs build on CMAM, C-IYCF, Anaemia prevention and control etc.	1. Integrate this activity during outreach services, Home visiting , defaulter tracing etc.	Conduct the monitoring visits to all our 166 active CHVs and others.	Active CHVs	Quarterly	Facility In-charges with support from the Municipal Health Directorate	10,000 Fuel and field per diem	Use MCHP or IGF to conduct this activity
Nutrition	Quality Improvement	Monthly QI Teams Meeting D16	Building the capacity of Facility - Incharges and coaches to carry out this activity.		To ensure that health indicators are improved	Improvement on indicators	Monthly	QI Teams with support from DHD, SDHMT	GHC 4000 to buy fuel for coaches to visit and support teams conduct their meetings	Use IGF, Commitment
Nutrition	Quarterly Community Health Durbars	Provide adequate knowledge and information to mothers on Maternal nutrition and IYCF practices	The facility and communities are well informed to provide positive Nutrition behaviors to improve the health of mothers and their children. It will also have integrated with other routine services provided at service delivery points (CWC, ANC, OPD and PNC).	The Facility staff and communities have some information on maternal and IYCF practices for positive nutrition behaviors. It will be also integrated into community Outreaches	Technical Support Visits from Facility to Community level. D16	Mothers, , Care-givers , PW, Adolescent	Quarterly	Communities, Facility Staff with Support from the District Health Directorate.	Community members to provide food ingredients for cooking demonstration, GHC 3,000 for Fuel	IGF, Communities
Nutrition	Supportive Supervision to MTMSG-FTFSG	Monitoring and supervision of MTMSG-FTFSG	Identify and monitor all the MTMSGs / FTFSGs in the communities. Capacity of MTMSG/FTFSG built on C-IYCF. Health staff to	Integrate this activity during outreach services, MCHNP monitoring etc. The DHD to support the monitoring with fuel from IGF. FTFSG Learning session supported by DHD .	Ensure that 100% of the MTMSGs are monitored and 100% of the FTFSGs are also monitored	MTMSG and FTFSG members	Quarterly	Facility Staff with Support from the District Health Directorate and commitment from	GHC 5,000 Fuel for field visits	Use MCHNP or IGF to conduct this activity

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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
			support groups to hold and attend meetings					community members.		
WASH	CLTS	Triggering of New Communities	Identification of communities and baseline data collection	Engagement of field facilitators,	Over 120 OD communities in the District	10 OD communities	October 2019- Dec 2020	EHSU	1,036.50 for pre triggering and triggering for all the 10 communities(fuel and lunch)	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
WASH	CLTS	Monitoring of Triggered OD Communities	progress monitoring, Assist households in siting latrines, taking of BaSIS progress monitoring, house to house inspection	Field facilitators engaging natural leaders and community members, DA assisting field facilitators in carrying out the activity successfully	31	31 communities in all	October 2019- Dec 2020	EHSU and community Development department	26,968.00 for monitoring for all the 31 communities(fuel and lunch)	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
WASH	CLTS	ODF Achievements	Community self-assessment, DICCS verification, RICCS verification	Field facilitators assisting natural leaders and community members to conduct self-assessment, DICCS verification	31	31 communities in all	Dec 2019- Dec 2020	EHSU and DICCS members with support from District Assembly	2,500 for the verification fuel and per diem	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
WASH	CLTS	Post-ODF Monitoring	Periodic monitoring towards ODF sustainability	Monitoring ODF communities	121 ODF communities in the district.	121 ODF communities in the district.	October 2019- December 2020	EHSU	10,000 for the monitoring of all the 121 communities	IGF
WASH	CLTS	Addressing Urban/ Peri-Urban OD								
WASH	CLTS	Natural Leaders Network - Continuation of Existing Effort	Capacity building of natural leaders	Organizing refresher training for existing Natural leaders and new ones that would be emerging from the OD communities yet to be triggered.	64	64 natural Leaders	Nov-19	EHSU with the support from DA World vision, UNICEP	9,000 for the training of natural leaders food, T&T and accommodation	IGF
WASH	CLTS	Natural Leaders Network - Expansion of Pilot	Using ODF natural leaders to trigger and monitor OD communities	Guide Natural leaders in CLTS Protocol towards improving their facilitation skill	16 Natural leaders	32 communities	Dec 2019- Dec 2020	EHSU with the support from DA World vision, UNICEP	2,000 for triggering support	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
WASH	Borehole Repairs		Identification of communities with broken down boreholes and assessment of the boreholes	Establish functional WSMT and training them to know their mandate. To also train pump care takers on their roles and responsibilities. Periodic monitoring of the WSMTs and pump care takers	20 beneficiaries communities approximately 330 households	3,300 beneficiaries approximately	Sept 2019 Dec 2020	EHSU in collaboration with works department	1,500 (fuel and lunch) for the identification and assessment of borehole	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
WASH	Hand Washing Stations		identification of health facilities and schools that requires these facility	Engage staff of DEHOs in selecting institutions and beneficiaries, DEHOS staffs link institutions to the DA and other donors for support.	15 Health and Educational facilities		Dec 2019 - Sept 2020	EHSU and Community Development Department	500 (fuel and lunch) for the identification	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
WASH	Latrine Rehabilitation		identification of broken down latrine and assessment	Engage DEHO staff in selecting the beneficiary institutions. Collaborate with works department in rehabilitation through the DACF and IGF	15 Educational and Health facilities		Dec 2019 - Sept 2020	EHSU and works department	ghc500.00 (fuel and lunch) for the identification and assessment of borehole	IGF, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS
Governance	Coordination Meetings	DPCU Meetings	Heads of Departments	Organise quarterly meetings	N/A	15 HODS	March, June, Sept and December 2020	DPCU	1,200 for the 4 quarters (Funds for snack and Lunch)	IGF/ DACF
Governance	Planning & Budget Forums	Engage the Area Council Members	Citizen forum	Engage the Area councils	N/A	200 beneficiaries	June2020-july 2020	DPCU	Funds for snacks and lunch for officers ghc1000.00	IGF/DACF
Governance	District Monitoring & Evaluation Systems Strengthening Efforts	M&E	Monitoring of Projects and A/Cs	RING Communities	N/A	25,000 beneficiaries	March, June, Sept and December 2020	DPCU	Funds for Fuel to travel into and out of communities and lunch for team members(ghc4,500)	IGF and DACF
Governance	Citizen's Forums/Town Hall Meetings	Organise town hall meetings	Meeting of the public to explain governments programmes and policies and feedbacks from the people	Engage them in the discussion	N/A	300 beneficiaries	June2020-july 2020	DPCU	Funds for snack and lunch for PARTICIPANTS (5000)	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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Gender	Gender Model Families	Formation of Gender Model Families in Communities	1. Identification of communities. 2. Selection of communities. 3. Carrying out community entry. 4. Selection of members of gender model families. 5. Training of gender model families	1. Gender officer engages with RING focal person to identify and select communities. 2. Gender officer moving into selected communities to pre-inform them about the activity. 3. Gender officer engages with community leaders to select members of the gender model families. 4. Gender team moving into the communities to train and sensitize selected gender model families.	Not applicable	500 beneficiary approximately	October 2019- March 2020	Gender/Planning unit	Funds for fuel to travel into and out of communities and lunch for sensitization of team members (GHC3,500)	DACF and IGF
Gender	Gender Support Network	Formation of District Gender Support Network Group	1. Identification of stakeholders or membership for the gender support network group 2. Inviting the identified stakeholders for a meeting by writing to them. 3. Discussing strategies to carryout gender support activities in the district, selecting dates for quarterly meetings and also selecting leadership for the GSN group	1. District gender officer in consultation with the assistant district planning officer identifies stakeholders to form membership of the district gender support network group. 2. DPCU writes invitation letters to members to inform them for the meeting. 3. Selecting Leadership for the gender support network group , selecting dates for quarterly meetings and discussing strategies to carryout gender activities during the meeting	Not applicable	20 members	Aug 2019- Dec-2020	Planning /Gender unit	Ghc400.00 * 4 quarters (ghc1,600.00)Funds to organise the quarterly GSN meetings	DACF and 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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Social Protection	Social Protection Monitoring	Monitoring of newly added leap communities	follow-up on leap cases in beneficiary households	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) engage focal persons of the New LEAP communities to mobilize and sensitize beneficiaries. 2) engage team members in refresher training 3) develop clear guidelines for follow ups in the new communities 4) train focal persons to conduct regular household visits on their own. 	1480 new beneficiary households in 13 communities	All the communities	November 2019 - December 2020	social welfare and community development	ghc1600 for fuel, ghc600 for stationery, ghc2300 for lunch and snack	IGF, DACF
Social Protection	VSLA LEAP Strategy	Monitoring of existing groups formation of new groups	<p>sensitization of newly added communities on VSLA</p> <p>identification of interested beneficiaries for VSLA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Development of group constitution, 2) Training of group on VSLA principles, 3) Commencement of share purchases, and 4) Entry of group data into the SAVIX database 5) Monitoring of groups 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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 	100 VSLAs in the District (approximately 3000 members and 59% of district population)		November 2019 - December 2020	social welfare and Community Development, with support from existing District VSLA team	ghc3,400 for fuel, ghc600 for stationery ghc4,800 For lunch	IGF, GOG

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 Dept/ Unit Responsible	Resources Required	Resource Acquisition Plan(s)
Social Protection	Social Protection Committees	Formation & Monitoring of New Groups	identification of groups members training of group members on social protection committee and its function follow-up visits to existing and newly formed groups	1) engage district social protection committee members to identify communities where issues of child protection is prevalent. 2) develop a guideline for selecting group members 3) engage community leaders and members in forum to sensitize them of child protection and the need for the CSPC. 4) together with community members and leaders identify CSPC members 5) formation and training of CSPC members on their roles and responsibilities 6) conduct follow-up visits to the committees to access their work.	40 CSPC's formed and trained in the district with a membership of 480 volunteers		November 2019 - December 2020	social welfare and Community Development, with support from District social protection committee members	ghc2,800 for fuel, ghc600 for stationery,ghc3600 for lunch and snack	IGF, DACF

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	Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation

	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.	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 and efficient, ensuring agendas are set according to GOG guidelines and that follow-up actions occur.	Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to Community 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: a woman from Bisaldo, an open defecation free community, utilizes her family's tippy tap hand washing station after using her household latrine.

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

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