



## USAID ADVANCE NEWSLETTER

### USAID/Ghana Mission Director Observes the Impact of USAID ADVANCE Project Interventions



Dozens of women in Kpanashe thronged the USAID/Ghana Mission Director as they drummed and danced to welcome her into their community

On October 26, 2017, the USAID/Ghana Mission Director, Sharon Cromer, traveled to Kpanashe in the Gushegu District in the Northern Region where she visited a soybean demonstration field and met with over 120 smallholder farmers, as well as two outgrower business (OB) owners (Alhassan Yussif and Alhassan Musah), an input dealer (Heritage Seeds Ltd.), and a financial institution (Opportunity International) to observe the project's impact.

The Mission Director first stopped at the soybean demonstration field, where the Chief of Party for the project, Dr. Emmanuel Dormon, explained the project's outgrower business model to Mrs. Cromer and her team. He explained how the project achieves its goal of increasing the competitiveness of the maize, rice, and soy value chains in Ghana through boosting agricultural productivity, improving the value chain actors' access to markets and finance, and strengthening local capacity.

#### Impact of the project

With a cultural display of drumming and dancing, Kpanashe community members welcomed the visiting team to the community. Speaking in turns, community members and the outgrower business (OB) owners narrated to the Mission Director how USAID ADVANCE's interventions have improved their agriculture productivity and livelihood. Alhassan Yussif, an OB, told a story of how the receipt of a sheller from the project enabled him to serve over 400 farmers across five communities compared to an initial 200 farmers in two communities.

The smallholder farmers narrated how the project's Good Agronomic Practices (GAPs) training, Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) and linkages to financial institutions, spray service provision, and linkage to Agricare (feed miller), have contributed to increased agriculture productivity and economic empowerment. Salat Fuseini, a smallholder female farmer remarked: "farming has become relatively easier because



The visiting team observing soybean plants on a demonstration field

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A USAID ADVANCE outgrower business (OB) Yussif Bunbas in the Brong Ahafo Region who combines livestock production with maize and other crops receiving the award of National Best Livestock Farmer from the Minister for Food and Agriculture. Yussif has 315 outgrowers (240 male/ 75 female) under the project's outgrower business scheme.

### USAID ADVANCE Farmers Take Home National Farmers' Day Awards

The 2017 National Farmers' Day celebration, held on 1st December, 2017, saw several USAID ADVANCE farmers take home awards. Abdul-Rahman Mohammed, an outgrower business owner from the Garu Tempene District in the Upper East Region was adjudged the National Best Crop Farmer. OB Yussif Bunbas of Atebubu Amantim District in the Brong Ahafo Region also won the National Best Livestock Farmer award.

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## Meet USAID ADVANCE's ICT and Outreach Specialist



Lynda Adwowa Figyinaba Stephens  
USAID ADVANCE's ICT & Outreach Specialist

**L**Lynda Adwowa Figyinaba Stephens joined the project in September 2016, from the Telecommunication Industry. Prior to joining the USAID ADVANCE project, she worked with Zain Communications Ghana Limited, Airtel Communications Ghana Limited and Vodafone UK, from 2008 to 2015. During her time in the Telecom Industry, she worked in the Customer Service and Sales Departments managing the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) platform, delivering quality customer service and sale of the companies' products to its clientele. Lynda holds a Master of Arts Degree (MA) in International Relations from Coventry University, UK and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA) in

Economics and Political Science from the University of Ghana.

As the project's Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and Outreach Specialist, she leads the project's effort in contributing significantly to reach out to its beneficiaries efficiently with agronomic tips, market prices and weather alerts through the use of ICT tools. She also provides technical guidance and support to the entire technical team to ensure the effectiveness of information flow and knowledge transfer among key actors in the value chain.

A key feature of her role is to ensure an increase in the use of ICT tools for e-agriculture to access agriculture information through agriculture service providers and radio stations, to provide e-extension services and to undertake electronic money activities. Lynda is effectively driving the increase of phone ownership among beneficiaries by running phone sales promotions among smallholder farmers. This has so far yielded positive results for the project as more beneficiary farmers are currently using the ICT tools available.

## USAID ADVANCE Takes Steps to Prevent Bushfires in the Savanna Belts of Ghana

**B**ushfires are a perennial problem across the savanna landscape of Ghana, which poses a serious threat to farms and farm produce. To forestall high incidence of the menace in 2017, USAID ADVANCE adopted a number of interventions, including: radio campaigns (jingles and live presenter mentions), print campaigns (banners, posters, etc.); and sensitization by project staff during field days. The project has also formed eight community volunteer squads in all regions of operations as a sustainability strategy for continuous education on the subject.

Under the theme, "Say No to Bushfires", the project launched anti-bushfire campaigns in collaboration with the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) in the three northern regions and Brong Ahafo Region to draw the public's attention to the devastating effects of bushfires on food production and climate change.

In attendance at the launches were chiefs, community leaders, representatives from the Ghana National Fire Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Municipal and District Assembly, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Forestry Commission and Information Services Department. All participating organizations delivered messages on the causes and effects of bushfires and advised participants to desist from bush burning to save our environment.

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A section of participants at an anti-bushfire campaign durbar in the Upper West Region

## USAID ADVANCE Farmers Take Home National Farmers' Day Awards

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Other award winners include:

- Ben Awuni Asantaga, from the East Mamprusi District won the overall Northern Regional Best Farmer
- Grace Owusu was adjudged the Best Woman in Agriculture in the Brong Ahafo Region
- Iddrisi Tia won the District Best Farmer in the Gushegu District, Northern Region
- Alabani Ibrahim won the District Best Maize Farmer in the Karaga District, Northern Region
- Peter Wada emerged the Second Runner-Up Best Farmer in the Saboba District, Northern Region
- Muniru Adam, an outgrower emerged the best maize farmer in the Nanumba North District, Northern Region
- David Yanful, took home the Best Municipal Farmer award in Mampong Municipal, Ashanti Region
- Mrs. Margaret Awenyoko was awarded the Second Runner-Up District Best Farmer in the Builsa North District, Upper East Region



# USAID ADVANCE Fosters Private sector-led Economic Growth through Partnerships



The West Africa Divisional Sales Manager of John Deere/AFGRI (the event's lead sponsor) explaining their business operations to the Northern Regional Minister, Hon. Salifu Saeed, and the Dep. Agriculture Minister, Hon. Dr. Sagre Bambangi, as they look on and listen with rapt attention



Dignitaries and organizers of the pre-harvest agribusiness event in a press conference with over 35 media houses



In commemoration of the International Rural Women's Day (IRWD), the project awarded six women at the pre-harvest event for their contribution to improving livelihood in their respective communities

Recognized as the largest annual gathering of farmers, buyers, manufacturers, government officials, development partners and financial institutions, the annual Pre-Harvest Agribusiness event draws private sector investment and encourages the sustainable growth of agribusinesses in Ghana. On October 19, 2017, USAID ADVANCE in collaboration with Agri-House Foundation, organized the seventh event in Tamale, to build business relationships around the 2017 maize, rice and soybean harvest.

In attendance were Deputy Minister for Food and Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Sagre Bambangi; Northern Regional Minister, Honorable Salifu Saeed; and USAID/Ghana Agriculture Team Leader, Jenna Tajchman; USAID Private Sector Team Lead, Pearl Coleman; and Chiefs of Party for the USAID ADVANCE and ATT projects, Dr. Emmanuel Dormon and Gary Mullins.

The pre-harvest event brought together over 900 agribusiness stakeholders across the country to network and learn about the latest technological advances in agriculture. Participants shared lessons and identified opportunities and challenges within the sector. The

event featured business to business sessions as well as an exhibition, showcasing improved agricultural equipment, inputs and services. The event rallied agribusiness stakeholders and the private sector to forge partnerships and make strategic investments to spur economic growth.

Ms. Tajchman shared that, "In Ghana, our Feed the Future program aims to expand economic opportunities and boost agricultural productivity. Over 85,000 individuals applied improved technologies and practices on over 72,600 hectares of land. The application of these improved technologies combined with training and marketing assistance led to farmer beneficiaries selling produce valued at over \$120 million following the 2016 crop season. Now is the time to sustain this momentum and continue making investments that ensure Ghana's progress, especially as Ghana advances the Beyond Aid Agenda."

The event also featured a press conference with over 35 media houses, which enabled further engagement on USAID's objective and

*"I was able to secure trade links with seven potential buyers. I see this to be a great opportunity for me and my association to improve and expand our businesses. I wish we could have the opportunity again to create more market links"*

- Chairman, Odumase No. I Market, Brong Ahafo Region

outcomes of the pre-harvest event. In commemoration of the International Rural Women's Day celebration, the project used the event as an occasion to celebrate six women for their outstanding contribution to improving livelihood in their communities.

USAID ADVANCE will continue to link rural farmers to new market opportunities with the support of the private sector.



A cross-section of participants at the agribusiness event



An officer of the Ghana National Fire Service demonstrating how to extinguish fire using a sack

## USAID ADVANCE Takes Steps to Prevent Bushfires in the Savanna Belts of Ghana

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Community members shared experiences and staged dramas on the negative effects of bushfires. The fire service teams also put up bushfire fighting demonstrations, which included the creation of fire belts and the use of fire beaters, water and blankets to quench domestic and bush fires. All stakeholders, including chiefs and nomadic herdsman, pledged their support towards fighting bushfires in their communities and beyond. The Forestry Commission also pledged to offer free seedlings to contribute towards afforestation in various communities.

USAID ADVANCE promotes climate-smart agriculture to help farmers withstand climate change and increase their yields. The project will engage the media and other stakeholders to continue the campaign and fight against bushfires.

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we get money from VSLA to buy farm input and pay for spray services". The women happily affirmed that they have learnt new and better ways of preparing food with soy because of the project's trainings on soybean utilization, and assured to continue the practice. From an average of seven bags on two acres in previous years, Awabu Andani, a smallholder farmer, said that she had increased yields to 15 bags on the same land, in the 2017 farming season using the improved seeds and other technology enhancing services delivered by USAID ADVANCE.

An observed impact of the project's interventions is its contribution to the reduction of rural urban migration in the community. Alhassan Yussif revealed that he supports 25 young women and 40 young men in farming, but for which support all of them would have migrated from the community to pursue greener pastures in the urban centers.

### Mission Director's Remarks

The Mission Director, in her remarks, applauded the project for their support to communities and for contributing to the competitiveness of the maize, rice, and soy value chains. She also lauded

the project for adopting the smartcard technology, which has improved data collection and monitoring. She encouraged the women to continue with the practice of using soybean for assorted meals. Mrs. Cromer could not hide her joy when she learnt that through the project's interventions, the incidence of rural urban migration had reduced. She assured of the US Government's efforts to support Ghana to achieve their development objectives.

### The visiting team

The Mission Director was accompanied by five USAID Mission staff: Jenna Tajchman, USAID Agriculture Team Lead; Grace Sebugah, Agriculture Specialist; Joseph Ashong, Nutrition Specialist; Paul Napari, Education Specialist; Yooku Ata-Bedu, Development Outreach and Communications Assistant.

The USAID ADVANCE team comprised: Dr. Emmanuel Dormon, Chief of Party; Francis Essuman, Northern Regional Coordinator; Abdul-Rashid Alhassan, Gender Specialist; and Francis Kwamena Ainoo, Public Relations and Communications Specialist.



A smallholder farmer (standing with a smartcard on the neck) explaining to the Mission Director the VSLA concept and its benefits to them. The men seated on her left and right are the outgrower businesses, Yussif and Musah, respectively



Dr. Emmanuel Dormon (USAID ADVANCE Chief of Party) using an outgrower business model chart to explain the project's Outgrower Business Model to the USAID/Ghana Mission Director

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