

USAID CREATES CLIMATE CHANGE AMBASSADORS

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its 3-year funded Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP), managed by the US Forest Service International Programs, has formed Climate Change Clubs (CCC) in two public schools in Ghana's Western Region. Teachers and students of the club, numbering 80, serve as Climate Change (CC) Ambassadors, educating their parents, peers and community members on the causes and effects of climate change on their daily lives.

Amazingly, some of the students have supported CSLP to promote an important climate change mitigation activity by encouraging their parents and other relatives, mostly farmers, to avoid deforestation. In most of the project intervention communities, farmers have, on average, an acre of secondary forest at the borders of their farms. Prior to CSLP they were keen to extend their farming activities by removing the secondary forests. Now, with the intensive sensitization efforts of the CSLP team and Climate Change Club members, the farmers have decided against the removal and burning of these on-farm forest areas after understanding more about other values they hold. Most of these farmers have now decided to use their secondary forest patches for beekeeping, a source of medicinal plants, and other timber and non-timber forest products.

Previously, a significant number of farmers who planted trees initiated by past climate change projects

that promised cash rewards, were at the verge of completely cutting down those trees as no such rewards were received. But now with the outreach interventions by the CSLP team, coupled with awareness being enhanced by CCC members, the remaining trees will continue to grow on their land as farmers are now willing to keep them without expecting any direct financial rewards.

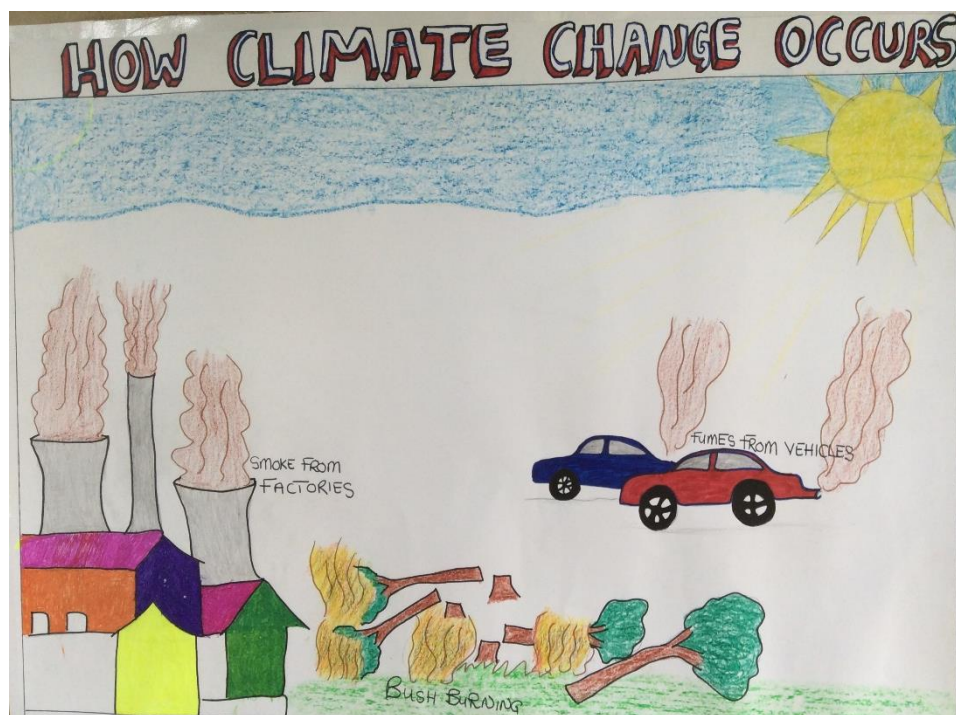


Club members marching through a community with messages on Climate Change to raise awareness

Currently one of the clubs, Asonti Municipal Assembly Junior High School CCC, has an organic farm (located less than 5 meters from the school premises) and intends to use it to educate their parents and other adults on Climate Smart Agricultural practices. As observed by one of the teachers, Mr. Somiah, *"most farmers in Ghana now use agrochemicals for almost every farming activity. They complain of not having money but buy lots of agrochemicals. However, they could have saved money by practicing*

organic ways of farming and that is what members of the CC Club have started through the support of CSLP. In few months, our farm will serve as a demonstration site for farmers outside the region". The club members are currently waiting for their supply of some tree seedlings from CSLP to plant in their farm. They are promoting agroforestry in the communities as they recognize tree planting as one of the ways to address the impacts of climate change.

Similarly, club members at Aduzuazo District Assembly Junior High School are using drama and artwork to enhance awareness on climate change. USAID, through CSLP, has simplified understanding of climate change through a brochure that includes artwork by the Climate Change Club. Both clubs have planned a series of events at the local level to help in their sensitization and behavioral change efforts. These include tree planting, clean up exercises, community gatherings/meetings, processions with placards, discussions on radio and peer education in other schools.



Artwork by Aduzuazo District Assembly JHS Climate Change Club

Over the past several months a number of media groups (print, online, TV and radio) have followed with keen interest the activities of the two clubs as is evidenced in their local, regional and national reporting. There is no doubt that these club members will continue to serve as Climate Change Ambassadors for years to come. The District Director of Education for Jomoro District of Ghana has observed, "... the CSLP has caught these children at the right time, for as you catch them young, they will be yours forever".