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RESILIENCY IN NORTHERN GHANA (RING) QUARTERLY REPORT FY 2018 (October 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017) Contract No. AID-641-C-14-00002



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FY 2018 Q1 (October 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017)

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEA	Agriculture Extension Agent
AMEP	Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
APS	Annual Program Statement
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BAC	Business Advisory Center
C4H	Communicate for Health
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDO	Community Development Officer
CHPS	Community-based Health Planning and Services
CHW	Community Health Worker
C-IYCF	Community-based infant and young child feeding
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CMAM	Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition
CWC	Child Welfare Clinic
DA	District Assembly
DAD	District Agricultural Department
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DFT	District Facilitation Team
DHA	District Health Administration
DHMT	District Health Management Team
DHS	Demographic & Health Survey
DICCS	District Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation
DNO	District Nutrition Officer
DPCU	District Planning and Coordinating Unit
DPO	District Planning Officer
DWST	District Water and Sanitation Teams
E4H	Evaluate for Health
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
EHSU	Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit
ENA	Essential Nutrition Action
FAM	Fixed Asset Management
FMO	Financial Management Office
FtF	Feed the Future
FY	Fiscal Year
G2G	Government-to-Government
GA	Governance Advisor
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOG	Government of Ghana
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSA/SNG	Global Shea Alliance/Shea Network Ghana

HW	Health worker
IR	Intermediate Result
ISD	Information Services Department
JSI	John Snow, Inc.
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METSS	Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support Services
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly
MOGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plan
MTMSG	Mother-to-Mother Support Group
MUAC	Mid/Upper-Arm Circumference
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NL	Natural Leader
NLN	Natural Leaders Network
NRCC	Northern Region Coordinating Council
NRHD	Northern Regional Health Directorate
ODF	Open-Defecation Free
OFSP	Orange Fleshed Sweetpotato
PFM	Public Financial Management
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
PPA	Public Procurement Authority
QA	Quality Assurance
RAD	Regional Agricultural Department
RDCD	Regional Department of Community Development
RDSW	Regional Department of Social Welfare
ReFMIC	Resource and Financial Management Improvement Committee
REHSD	Regional Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate
RHD	Regional Health Directorate
RICCS	Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation
RING	Resiliency in Northern Ghana
RPCU	Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit
S4H	Systems for Health
SARI	Savannah Agricultural Research Institute
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SHEP	School Health Education Program
SIL	Soybean Innovation Lab
SOW	Scope of Work
SPRING	Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally
SW/CDO	Social Welfare/Community Development Officer
TOT	Training of Trainers
UDS	University for Development Studies
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Associations
W4H	WASH for Health
WASH	Water Access, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WIAD	Women in Agricultural Development
WSMT	Water and Sanitation Management Team

Executive Summary

During the first three and a half years of implementation, Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) has made great strides toward achieving the overall objectives of reducing poverty and malnutrition in some of the most vulnerable households in the Northern Region. Consistent with USAID's Local Solutions Framework principles of direct support to host governments, RING technical interventions are implemented through a collaborative approach with 17 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA) in the Northern Region of Ghana, as well as with seven departments within the Northern Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC), with technical assistance provided by the contractor, Global Communities. For most RING districts, the priority during the initial years of implementation was to reach as many communities as possible with at least one intervention and cover a vast geographic area. As districts progressed toward reaching over 1,200 targeted communities, the focus has now shifted and includes the strategic layering and integration of activities in the communities in order to achieve higher impact at the household level. Recognizing that household food insecurity and nutrition challenges are the result of a complex multi-sectoral environment, the RING approach to improving resiliency is to provide the most vulnerable households with targeted support in multiple areas including livelihoods, agriculture, nutrition, governance, and water access, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). USAID has theorized that this deliberate integration of activities will garner a more substantial and holistic impact to truly lift households out of poverty, reduce the overwhelming burden of anemia in women and children, and childhood stunting, wasting, and underweight conditions. Having directly benefited nearly 68,000 vulnerable homes during the first three and a half years of the project's five-year lifespan, RING has exceeded its life of project goal of directly benefiting 42,000 households.

After the gains made in Fiscal Year 2017, the first quarter of FY18 continued with the same momentum of achieving a deeper impact upon a larger number of partner households. Gains made under the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) activity were continued as more than 2,800 groups saved a cumulative total of US\$2.75million and loaned out more than US\$1.23million. Given the seasonal calendar of the region, the majority of agriculture efforts centered on harvesting, improved storage, and utilization of nutrition-sensitive crops, such as orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and soybeans. While 7,265 farmers harvested over 1,800 Metric Tons (MT) of soybean, more than 13,200 farmers benefitted from OFSP in the 2017 calendar year, resulting in over 526MT of the nutrient dense tuber harvested. These households, like those benefitting from soybeans, were educated on how to incorporate the crops into the traditional diet, fortifying local recipes for children, pregnant and lactating mothers, and other members of the family. Global Communities RING assisted district nutrition teams in forming an additional 372 mother-to-mother support groups (MTMSG) layered onto existing VSLAs, bringing the total number of VSLAs covered with the positive deviant and best practice sharing approach to 1,008. Given the peak harvesting season, District Health Management Teams conducted cooking demonstrations in coordination with agriculture and environmental health staff, reaching nearly 24,000 people from 308 communities with education on how to incorporate nutritious foods into the local diet. Capacity building efforts included training on anemia prevention and control, Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM), and Community-based Infant and Young Child Feeding (C-IYCF) to cover nearly 100% of health workers in target districts, enabling them to provide frontline services to their communities. To support improved sanitation in a sustainable manner, RING continued to promote the scale up of the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) activity, triggering 27 new communities during the quarter and supporting 80 communities to reach open defecation free (ODF) status, bringing the cumulative number of ODF communities over the life of project (LOP) to 301, or 77% of the

RING Project target. Borehole repairs also continued as a priority; during the year, districts repaired an additional 29 units, bringing the LOP total to 549 and providing approximately 165,000 individuals with access to potable water. To further enable Government of Ghana (GOG) staff to respond to the livelihood, nutrition, and WASH needs of vulnerable households, the Global Communities RING Governance Team engaged in a number of complementary efforts. Numerous partner districts undertook social protection outreach, linking more than 4,200 households with national health insurance and supporting over 1,800 health insurance card holders to address issues related to service delivery. The Governance Team has also cumulatively supported each of the 17 partner MMDAs to produce 972 Community Action Plans, or CAPs, which are the foundation for ensuring district development plans include priority areas from communities in nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods and WASH. To date, 46% of the communities in RING districts now have a CAP through the support of the program.

RING will continue to focus on increasing women's options for income generation and their control over household assets, as research has shown that empowering women, especially mothers, has a direct impact on improved household nutrition¹. Additionally, based on the districts' plans for the year, RING will explore ways to reduce the burden of daily activities on women's time, and increase their social capital by promoting group-based activities that offer more robust social safety nets. RING interventions will also focus on the husband's role in all activities to ensure that the interventions are holistic, supportive, and framed within a diverse and dynamic cultural context.

1. Introduction

The USAID Resiliency in Northern Ghana Project (RING) project is a poverty reduction program designed to improve the nutrition and livelihood status of vulnerable households. RING applies a multi-sectorial approach to increase the resiliency of these households through agriculture, income generation, savings and loans, nutrition, WASH, and governance interventions. Through these interventions, the project aims to improve the lives of women, namely by increasing their control over household income and increasing their social capital, resulting in more resilient families and improved nutrition for women and children.

Since its start, RING has worked through Government of Ghana (GOG) systems to deliver services to some of the most impoverished communities in the Northern Region. In June 2014, Global Communities was awarded the RING technical assistance contract and the project expanded its technical support across all component areas to 17 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and the Northern Region Coordinating Council (NRCC) and six regional departments. As RING begins the 2018 fiscal year (FY18), districts are in the process of successfully closing out their 2017 work plans, which includes implementation of agriculture, livelihoods, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, and governance activities, as well as finalizing their 2018 work plans and budgets. Global Communities RING will continue to work closely with the districts and regional leadership and technical units to ensure the effective delivery of quality services to vulnerable households throughout the process.

This report covers the first quarter (Q1) of FY18 and details progress made towards achieving the following component objectives:

- Component One: Increased access to and consumption of diverse and high-quality food among targeted households, especially among women and children;

¹ Feed the Future (2014). Understanding the Women's Empowerment Pathway. Feed the Future. *Improving Nutrition through Agriculture Technical Brief Series*. March 2014. Available from: https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/briefs/spring_womensempowerment_brief_4_0.pdf

- Component Two: Improved nutrition and hygiene behaviors among women and children; and
- Component Three: Strengthened local support networks addressing the ongoing nutrition and livelihood needs of vulnerable households.

2. Administration and Finance

During this quarter, the Administration and Finance Team undertook a number of key activities to support the implementation of the RING Project. In addition to procurement of goods and services, hiring of personnel, and negotiating promotions and contract extensions, the Administration and Finance Team successfully assisted the external audit of FY17 transactions. After engaging the services of Ernst and Young Ghana, Global Communities is proud to report that no material findings were found for a third year in a row. This positive outcome is a strong indication of the commitment by the Global Communities RING team to adhere to contract management rules and regulations. Highlights from a number of areas in Grants & Contracts, as well as Human Resources, are cited below.

2.1. Grants and Contracts

During the quarter, the Grants & Contracts Unit supported the project through negotiating administrative and programmatic agreements as summarized below.

- Facilitated organization and payments for large workshops and events, such as the CLTS Workshop, MTMSG Workshop, OFSP Celebrations, and Staff Team Building and Reviewing meeting;
- Organized documentation to support the FY17 External Audit;
- Processed payments for three subcontracted districts, payment for UDS Task Order #04, and for other various vendors and service providers;
- Supported successful district implementation of seasonal activities by undertaking the procurement of a number of goods (tarpaulins and improved storage bags, locally-woven fencing, and radio sets & memory cards for MTMSGs) and securing successful delivery; and
- Issued a Purchase Order for borehole water quality test analysis.

2.2. Human Resources

During the quarter, Global Communities RING hired five full-time staff – four drivers and one data entry clerk. Short-term staff were also hired during the quarter or had their work agreements extended, including:

- To fast track CLTS support efforts, 10 new Monitors (for CLTS and Natural Leaders Network monitoring) were brought on board, and the 13 currently-contracted Field Monitors had their agreements renewed.
- 17 Mother to Mother Support Group (MTMSG) Monitors were brought on board to rapidly scale up the intervention from 464 to 3,000 by September 2018.
 - These Monitors will also support districts with the rollout of the FTFSG intervention in RING VSLA/MTMSG communities as planned in Districts' 2018 Annual Work Plans.
 - In an effort to ensure that the institutional memory of the intervention stays within Ghana Health Services (GHS), each district collaborated with Global Communities RING and the Northern Regional Health Directorate (NRHD) to provide a list of recommended health staff for the positions. In nearly all cases, the District Health Administrations (DHA) participated in the recruitment and interview processes before the best candidates were selected.
- Three short-term data entry clerks were hired to support enter data received during the

- quarter into the DHIS database; and
- Twenty-three current VSLA Facilitators had their contracts renewed to continue VSLA supplemental support efforts and also to support the upcoming VSLA for LEAP rollout.

During the quarter, performance evaluations for FY17 were successfully completed and the merit increases approved by the Acting Chief of Party implemented. No departures were recorded. By the close of the calendar year, Global Communities RING had staff of 140, comprising: 63 local staff, 2 expatriates, 7 staff under core implementing partners (JSI & Urban Institute), 2 Peace Corps Volunteers, and 66 employees designated as consultants or temporary help.

3. Regional Partner Coordination and Support

During the quarter, the Global Communities RING Technical Team continued its close collaboration with regional government partners. This collaboration included providing feedback on work plans and field-level findings, discussing strategies for planned trainings, and providing input into agendas and, in some cases, co-facilitation support for said trainings. As the primary coordinating entity for the Northern Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC), the Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit (RPCU) was the main point of contact for RING senior leadership, though, on a departmental level, the Global Communities RING Team frequently engaged with the various regional units.

Much of the quarter's focus was on the successful completion of the regional work plan, as well as providing the required support to districts to complete their own work plans. This regional support centered on the completion of a number of trainings, including two for the Regional Department of Social Welfare (RDSW), as well as one for the Regional Department of Community Development (RDCD), all of which targeted district level officers for various types of capacity building. Under Nutrition, Global Communities RING collaborated closely with the Northern Regional Health Directorate (NRHD) as they implemented the remaining portion of their Top Up Trainings in C-IYCF and CMAM to untrained district health staff. Coordination with the Regional Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit (REHSU) also continued successfully as Global Communities RING played a supporting role for the Regional Interagency Coordination Committee for Sanitation (RICCS) to conduct their ODF verification visits, as well as to prepare for ODF League Table forums. The Regional Agriculture Department had planned a seasonal engagement with district officers to promote and discuss dry season vegetable cultivation with drip irrigation and Global Communities RING was poised to support with this. However, the forum was cancelled at the last minute due to some issues that the RPCU raised with the cost of the venue compared to other similarly-sized events. By the time RAD submitted a revised funds request based on RPCU feedback, there was no longer funding available with the region to cater for the event. It has since been shifted to their 'fourth quarter funds request' in case the region is granted an extension on 2017 activities.

As the lead coordinating body among regional partners with RING, the RPCU organized and hosted a mid-year review meeting for all districts to report on accomplishments under their 2017 work plans. The format of the presentations were standard, covering district accomplishments against targets, and included additional analysis on activities where they had performed well and contributing factors, as well as those areas that they had struggled and how they would address them. Global Communities RING provided input into the agenda, as well as the overall format of the program, ensuring that more emphasis was placed on critical analysis of the results achieved thus far, as opposed to districts reporting only the figures. Subsequent discussion centered on impediments to districts achieving 2017 targets, needed support from the region (i.e. timely responses by Regional Environmental Health to carry out ODF

inspections), and foreseen manpower limitation challenges with continued scale-up in 2018. USAID also used this forum as an opportunity to deliver key findings from recent external audits and their own deep dive into district financial records. This update included an emphasis on allowable and unallowable costs, and record keeping to support expenses. These challenges were consistent across all districts and regional departments and the forum provided the perfect opportunity to elucidate upon these serious issues.

In support of USAID's commitment to strengthening its partnership with local governments, USAID and Global Communities RING again coordinated with the RPCU to host a one-day orientation to the project for Metropolitan, Municipal and District Coordinating Directors (MMDCD) that had been recently transferred into RING partner districts. In all, six RING partner districts have new Coordinating Directors and to support their orientation, Global Communities, the NRCC, and USAID invited MMDCDs, as well as available Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCE) to the orientation to share their experiences and insights with the new Directors. Project leadership made presentations on the general objectives of RING, accomplishments to date, and the annual cycle of the project, as well as hallmarks of leaders in successful RING districts. Results post-meeting have been positive as several district leaders have paid courtesy calls to the RING Project office in Tamale to update Senior Management on the happenings in their district or to gain clarity on key aspects of project implementation, such as the community selection process. This meeting proved timely as districts had just completed 2018 work plans and were preparing to close out 2017 work plans.

Throughout the quarter, the Governance Team coordinated with each of the Global Communities RING Technical Units to provide feedback on the 2018 regional work plan. To ensure the plan was more focused on actual needs of the project and district officers (per documented capacity gaps, technical strategies, etc.), Global Communities RING undertook a number of consultative sessions with the regional team to ensure that activities planned for 2018 were well thought out and budgeted for appropriately. This series of meetings before the development of the first draft of the work plan was embarked upon to avoid the numerous delays noted in the development of the 2017 regional AWP. By the close of the quarter, the NRCC had submitted a complete first draft to USAID for their feedback. Global Communities RING undertook an initial review and provided its responses in relation to previous discussions with the region to USAID just before the holiday break. To close out the year, Global Communities RING hosted a regional OFSP harvest event, to which all regional departments, along with USAID and representatives from UDS were invited. District staff were in attendance, as well as representatives from the media, and all participants were updated by key project stakeholders on progress of the 2017 OFSP initiative and the plans for 2018 and beyond.

Despite these continuing engagements, in 2018, Global Communities RING will need to work more closely with the NRCC on the implementation of broader good governance activities as opposed to coordination of large events, trainings with narrow focus, and monitoring visits. The RPCU and similar regional offices can and should play a key role in the roll out of sustainability efforts under RING which will begin in earnest in 2018 – this includes both continuation of actual activities implemented through RING support, as well as some of the M&E gains that have been made. At the same time, Global Communities RING recognizes that, at this point in implementation, some regional departments are more engaged and committed to achieving successful outcomes under RING than others. As we move into the final substantive year of implementation, this recognition, combined with past levels of efforts and results realized (or not realized), should play a deciding factor in how strongly RING pushes for those departments to be involved in day to day operations. More details on each of the areas mentioned above, as well as additional collaboration efforts, can be found in the various technical narratives following.

4. Summary of Activities and Progress toward Results

The table below provides a summary of progress against the Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP) for the quarter.

Table 1 RING Indicator Performance Tracking Table (Project Start to Date)

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)												
#	ID	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY18						LOP Results to Date	LOP Target
					FY 18 Targets	Q1	Q2	Q3	FY18 Cumulative Results	FY18 Cumulative Progress		
Program Goal: Improved livelihood and nutritional status of vulnerable households in targeted communities in the Northern Region of Ghana												
Impact Indicators: RING will contribute to achieving USAID/Ghana Feed the Future Goals (with other Feed the Future IPs)												
1	HL.9-a	Prevalence of stunted children under five years of age (R)	Every 2 years	30.46%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	30.5%	24.37%
2	HL.9-g	HL.9-g Prevalence of anemia among children 6-59 months(O)	Baseline & end line	82.10%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	65.68%
3	HL.9-c	HL.9-c Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age(R)	Every 2 years	21.59%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	21.6%	17.27%
4	HL.9-b	HL.9-b Prevalence of wasted children under five years of age(R)	Every 2 years	14.69%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	14.7%	11.75%
Goal Level Output Indicators												
5	HL.9-1	HL.9-1 Number of children under five (0-59 months) reached by USG-supported nutrition programs(R)	Annual	0	134,135	67,946 ²			67,946	50.7%	509,867	616,458
6	1.1.1	1.1.1: Number of communities supported through USG assistance (custom indicator)	Quarterly	0	173	37			37	21%	1,350	1,190
7	1.1.2	1.1.2: Number of individuals reached by programming	Quarterly	0	64,723	47,707 ³			47,707	74%	416,349	326,000

² 34,652 male, 33,294 female; includes September 2017 data as this was not available as of FY17 reporting.

³ This includes number of people reached through borehole repairs-8700, Cooking demonstration and community durbars-37,305 and unique number of women of reproductive age group-1,702

8	1.1.3	1.1.3: Number of women of reproductive age reached	Quarterly	0	15,000	1,702			1,702	11%	82,567	81,000
Component 1 Result: Increased access to and consumption of diverse quality food among target households, especially among women and children under five												
Intermediate Result 1a: Increased access to savings and credit among target households												
9	1.1.1.1	1.1.1.1: Number of active informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	427	282			282	66%	2,818	1,785
10	1.1.1.2	1.1.1.2: Number of members of active informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	11,529	7,990			7,990	69%	80,903	49,116
11	1.1.1.3	1.1.1.3: Cumulative Amount (in USD) Saved by informal Savings and lending (VSLA) Group	Quarterly	0	649,824	463,993 ⁴			463,993	71%	2,716,171	2,269,529
12	1.1.1.4	1.1.1.4: Amount of funds loaned (in USD) annually by informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	194,947	274,436 ⁵			274,436	141%	1,048,596	751,560
Intermediate Result 1b: Increased diversification of income throughout the year among target households												
13	EG.3-1	EG.3-1: Number of households benefiting directly from USG assistance under Feed the Future	Ongoing, reported quarterly	0	2,000	1,424			1,424	71%	67,973	42,000
14	1.1.2.1	1.1.2.1: % of households who state they are more financially secure	Mid-term & end line	0%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	70%
Intermediate Result 1c: Increased availability of affordable, diverse plant and animal foods throughout the year among target households												
15	EG.3.2-17	EG.3.2-17: Number of farmers and others who have applied improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance	Quarterly	0	25,000	921			921	4%	43,267	21,000
16	1.1.3.1	1.1.3.1: % of target households benefiting from crop intervention reporting use of techniques to reduce post-harvest losses	Mid-term & end line	0%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	75%
17	1.1.3.2	1.1.3.2: % of target households reporting shorter lean season	Mid-term & end line	0%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	70%

⁴ This is equivalent to GHS 2,050,293.00 at an exchange rate of 1\$ to GHS 4.4188

⁵ This is equivalent to GHS 1,212,677.00 at an exchange rate of US\$1 to GHS 4.4188

18	1.1.3.3	1.1.3.3: % of target households using improved practices in horticulture, small animal husbandry, and other alternative livelihoods	Quarterly	0%	85%	23% ⁶			23.2%	27%	23%	90%
19	EG.3.2-20	EG.3.2-20: Number of for-profit private enterprises, producers organizations, water users associations, women's groups, trade and business associations and community-based organizations (CBOs) that applied improved organization-level technologies or management practices with USG assistance (RAA) (WOG)	Quarterly	0	560	282			282	50%	2,881	1,785
20	1.1.3.4	1.1.3.4: Number of small ruminants distributed to beneficiaries as a result of USG assistance	Quarterly	0	20,000	391			391	2%	37,524	42,500
21	1.1.3.5	1.1.3.5: % change in number of small ruminants owned by beneficiaries	Annual	0%	10%	11.4% ⁷			11.4%	114%	11.4%	25%
22	1.1.3.6	1.1.3.6: % of targeted households who have increased their income through RING supported activities	Mid-term & end line	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	80%
Component 2 Result: Improved behaviors related to nutrition and hygiene for women and children												
23	1.2.1	1.2.1: % of households adopting improved nutrition practices	Mid-term & end line	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	85%
Intermediate Result 2a: Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households												
24	1.2.1.1	1.2.1.1: % of respondents in target communities knowledgeable of appropriate infant and young child feeding practices	Baseline, midline & end line	35%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	34.68%	95%

⁶ Numerator is 330 with denominator as 1,424

⁷ The data is based on only 11 districts' quarterly monitoring data out of 17 districts. Numerator is 3,248 and Denominator is -28,383

25	1.2.1.2	1.2.1.2: Number of service delivery channels that mainstream appropriate nutrition messages throughout the community	Baseline, midline & end line	0	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	5	5
26	HL.9.1-c	HL.9.1-c: Women's Dietary Diversity: Mean number of food groups consumed by women of reproductive age group	Every two years	3.7	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	5.0
27	HL.9.1-a	HL.9.1-a Prevalence of children 6-23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet	Baseline, midline & end line	10%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	28%
28	HL.9.1-b	HL.9.1-b:Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding of children under six months of age	Baseline, midline & end line	60%	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	70%
29	HL.9-4	HL.9-4 : Number of individuals receiving nutrition-related professional training through USG-supported programs	Annual	N/A	1,700	N/A			0	0%	15,936	3,772
30	1.2.1.3	1.2.1.3: Number of people reached by USG-supported nutrition programs through Food demonstrations and community durbars	Quarterly	0	60,320	37,305 ⁸			37,305	62%	169,082	150,135
31	1.2.1.4	1.2.1.4: Number of women who received breastfeeding education through USG-supported programs	Annual	N/A	100,226	21,425 ⁹			21,425	21.4%	98,963	250,002
32	HL.9.2	HL.9.1: Number of children under two (0-23 months) reached with community-level nutrition interventions through USG-supported programs	Annual	N/A	120,722	60,753 ¹⁰			60,753	50.3%	157,654	250,002
33	HL.9.3	HL.9.2: Number of pregnant women reached with nutrition- specific interventions through USG-supported programs	Annual	N/A	100,226	21,425 ¹¹			21,425	21.4%	98,963	331,444

Intermediate Result 2b: Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors in target households and their communities

⁸ Male-13,662 and Female-23,643

⁹ Includes September 2017 data as this was not available for FY17 report.

¹⁰ Male-30,984 and Female-29,769. Includes September 2017 data as this was not available for FY17 report.

¹¹ Includes September 2017 data as this was not available for FY17 report.

34	HL.8.1-1	HL.8.1-1: Number of people gaining access to basic drinking water services as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	45,000	8,700 ¹²			8,700	19%	164,700	79,800
35	HL.8.1-3	HL.8.1-3: Number of people receiving improved service quality from an existing basic or safely managed drinking water service as a result of USG assistance	Quarterly	0	45,000	8,700 ¹³			8,700	19%	164,700	79,800
36	HL.8.1-4	HL.8.1-4: Number of institutional settings gaining access to basic drinking water services as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	5	1			1	20%	125	120
37	HL.8.2-1	HL.8.2-1: Number of communities verified as open defecation free (ODF) as a result of USG assistance(FA indicator)	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	142	80			80	56.3%	301	393
38	HL.8.2-2	HL.8.2-2: Number of people gaining access to a basic sanitation service as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	25,410	9,679 ¹⁴			9,679	38%	72,126	61,966
39	HL.8.2-3	HL.8.2-3: Number of people gaining access to safely managed sanitation services as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	12,000	0			0	0%	22,150	58,906
40	HL.8.2-4	HL.8.2-4: Number of basic sanitation facilities provided in institutional settings as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	40	0			0	0%	95	129
41	HL.8.2-5	HL.8.2-5: Percentage of households with soap and water at a handwashing station commonly used by family members	Mid-term & end line	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	30%
42	HL.8.2-6	HL.8.2-6: Percentage of households in target areas practicing correct use of recommended household water treatment technologies	Mid-term & end line	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A	40%
43	HL8.3-1	HL.8.3-1 Number of people educated on tools, approaches, and/or methods for water security, integrated water resource management, and/or water source protection as a result of USG	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	1,260	97			97	8%	1,930	2,171

¹² The number of people reached through borehole repairs-8700. A total of 29 boreholes were repaired with estimated reach of 300 people by a borehole.

¹³ The number of people reached through borehole repairs-8700. A total of 29 boreholes were repaired with estimated reach of 300 people by a borehole.

¹⁴ This is calculated by multiplying HH Latrines constructed by the average HH size of 7.9 in Northern Region

44	3.1.8.1-2	3.1.8.1-2: Number of people in target areas with first-time access to improved drinking water supply as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	45,000	8,700 ¹⁵		8,700	19%	164,700	79,800
45	3.1.8.1-2	3.1.8.1-2: % of respondents who know any 3 critical times of hand washing	Baseline midline & end line	91%	95%	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	95%
46	1.2.2.1	1.2.2.1: Number of hand washing stations installed in commonly used public spaces	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	500	174 ¹⁶		174	35%	1,659	1,651
47	1.2.2.2	1.2.2.2: % of RING communities certified as Open Defecation Free (ODF)	Ongoing	0%	30%	N/A		N/A	N/A	17%	33%
48	1.2.2.4	1.2.2.4: Number of area mechanics, pump care takers, Latrine artisans trained as a result of USG assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	200	56		56	28%	626	530
49	1.2.2.5	1.2.2.5: Number of improved water sources repaired for beneficiary communities through USG Assistance	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	150	29		29	19%	549	596
Component 3 Result: Strengthened local support networks addressing the ongoing (nutrition and livelihoods) needs of vulnerable households											
50	1.3.1	1.3.1: % of households reporting improvements in nutrition and livelihood services from local government	Mid & end line	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A	80%
Intermediate Result 3a: Strengthened capacity of target DAs and the NRCC to respond to community priorities for improved nutrition and livelihoods											
51	1.3.1.1	1.3.1.1: Number of target DAs that are eligible for direct funding from USAID	Annual / in line with DA planning process	0	17	16		16	94.1%	16	17
52	1.3.1.2	1.3.1.2: Mean percentage change in District FOAT Score among MMDAs not yet receiving direct funds from USAID	According to FOAT schedule ¹⁷	N/A	60%	N/A		N/A	N/A	8%	75%

¹⁵ The number of people reached through borehole repairs-8700. A total of 29 boreholes were repaired with estimated reach of 300 people by a borehole.

¹⁶ 17 of the Handwashing station were installed at health facilities and 157 were installed at basic schools.

¹⁷ FOAT has yet to be undertaken for the 2016 or 2017 period; GOG is responsible for undertaking this activity and RING has no say as to when it is actually done.

53	1.3.1.3	1.3.1.3: Percentage of direct-funded partner contribution toward the RING Annual Work Plan budget	Annual / in line with MMDA planning and budgeting process	N/A	25%	30% ¹⁸			30%	90.9%	30%	33%
54	1.3.1.4	1.3.1.4: Number of target MMDAs that institutionalize participatory planning and budgeting process for nutrition and livelihoods interventions	Annual / in line with MMDA planning and budgeting process	N/A	15	16			16	107%	16	17
55	1.3.1.5	1.3.1.5: Number of target MMDAs that produce annual and medium-term plans which demonstrate multi-sectoral collaboration across local agriculture, WASH, nutrition, and health teams.	Annual / in line with MMDA planning and budgeting process ¹⁹	N/A	14	N/A			N/A	N/A	17	17
56	1.3.1.6	1.3.1.6: Number of annual and medium-term plans by target MMDAs and the NRCC which prioritize good nutrition and include nutrition-related activities	Annual / in line with MMDA planning and budgeting process	N/A	36	17 ²⁰			17	47%	54	108
57	1.3.1.7	1.3.1.7: Number of MMDAs holding public forums and stakeholder meetings related to RING focal areas of livelihoods, nutrition, WASH, and good governance.	Ongoing; reported quarterly	N/A	16	13			13	81%	13	17
58	1.3.1.8	1.3.3.1: Percentage of core RING implementing departments that use community feedback to inform planning processes for their RING Annual Work Plans and Budgets and/or District Annual Action Plans	Annual	N/A	80%	N/A ²¹			N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
Result 3b: Strengthened capacity of target communities to integrate nutrition and livelihood priorities for vulnerable households into community action plans, implement activities, and monitor progress to respond to community priorities around nutrition and livelihoods												
59	1.3.2.2	1.3.2.2 Percentage of target households participating in community support groups	Annual	N/A	78%	77%			77%	98%	72%	80%

¹⁸ This data is representative of 2015-2016 as these are the only actual figures currently available. 2017 actuals should be captured in the Q2 or Q3 report, when 2017 implementation is completed (G2G districts are currently pending an extension for 2017 activities and an actual cannot be captured until that annual agreement has been closed).

¹⁹ MTDP development for the 2018-2021 period is ongoing; it should have been completed before the end of 2017, but the process has delayed across the region. This is expected to be finalized in mid- to late-2018 – as of now, we have 16 MMDAs that have produced annual action plans that meet the guidelines, but the indicator cannot be satisfied until MTDPs are also developed, with the way it is currently set up.

²⁰ This includes the AWP of 16 districts and NRCC

²¹ Supporting documents from the 2018 district work planning process is incoming and being reviewed to determine it meets acceptable guidelines per the AMEP definition. Field experience indicates most, if not all districts successfully engaged all core departments in the planning process.

60	HL.8.3-2	HL.8.3-2: Number of action plans implemented for water security, integrated water resource management, and/or water source protection as a result of USG assistance	Annual	N/A	300	N/A		0	0%	255	655
61	HL. 9-6	HL. 9-6: A national multi-sectoral nutrition plan or policy is in place that includes responding to emergency nutrition needs (Yes=1, No=0) (HL. 9-6)	Annual	N/A	1	1		1	100%	1	1
Intermediate Result 3c: Strengthened capacity of targeted DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition and livelihoods in their respective areas											
62	1.3.3.2	1.3.3.2: Number of coordination/review meetings between MMDAs and NRCC	Ongoing; reported quarterly	0	142	54 ²²		54	38%	162	462

²² This include RICCS monitoring reports for FY17 (which were not previously reported because the reports were not being shared with Global Communities RING on regular basis) and first quarter of FY18

4.1. Component One

Increased access and consumption of diverse quality food among targeted households, especially among women and children

Throughout the quarter, the Global Communities RING Agriculture and Livelihoods Team worked diligently to support districts to successfully complete the activities planned in their 2017 AWP. This included a number of season-bound activities, such as harvesting, yield calculation and improved storage for groundnuts, soybeans and OFSP, as well as coordination with District Nutrition and Environmental Health Officers on cooking demonstrations for the latter two. Additionally, the Agriculture and Livelihoods Team coordinated closely with MMDA staff on the identification of suitable sites for the supplemental support scheduled for the leafy green vegetables through drip irrigation technology. The team also delivered routine support in ongoing activities, such as VSLA and small ruminant monitoring. Administratively, the team collaborated with District Agriculture Departments (DAD) in four districts (Nanumba North, Savelugu-Nanton, Tolon, and West Gonja) to finalize and submit paperwork to USAID for the approval to purchase day-old-chicks under the poultry intervention. The following pages detail specific progress made during the quarter on a number of key interventions.

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA)

Activity Summary VSLA
<p>Training: Each group is trained by either a member of the District VSLA Team or a Global Communities RING VSLA Facilitator on the following areas: financial literacy, basic business management and entrepreneurial skills, VSLA concepts, constitution and group formation, record keeping, group dynamics, and conflict resolution. These trainings tend to last between 2 and 4 days, depending on how long the women are available to meet with the Facilitator each day. Once the trainings have been completed, women begin saving on a weekly basis.</p>
<p>Follow-Up Support: depending on the groups' progress, Facilitators tend to meet with a group over the course of a year 20-24 times. This includes weekly visits during the first four months of operation, then gradual waning down to monitoring on a monthly basis. This coincides with group leaders learning their roles more fully and women understanding the basic routine of saving, record keeping, updates on loans, etc.</p>
<p>Phase-Out Strategy: each group will continue to receive 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 fully functional without district support, though the district will check in periodically to capture savings data.</p>
<p>Global Communities RING Support: the technical team provides support to the district via TOT for the District VSLA Team, as well as general skills building for computer use and data entry into the SAVIX database. Global Communities RING also provides direct implementation support via short-term consultants, known as VSLA Facilitators – these officers are responsible for group set up and training (the most time-consuming aspect of the intervention) before handing over fully to the district. Some districts need additional manpower in order for them to establish more groups; once fully trained, the district has enough of its own staff to conduct regular group monitoring.</p>

At the start of FY18, the Global Communities RING Technical Team, together with Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) implementation teams from across the 17 partner districts, worked earnestly to consolidate the stellar growth across all VSLA indicators with regards to the following: the number of groups formed, amount saved and loaned, and the number of communities and members reached with VSLA intervention. Given that VSLA has a transmissible impact on women's ability to expand their livelihoods and access credit at critical periods throughout the year, the intervention has evolved into a foundational activity of RING's interventions as it provides a platform for integration with other nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Anecdotal evidence from field reports indicates that VSLA engagement makes a sustainable impact on vulnerable households by improving financial and food security, as well as acting as a tool to graduate from poverty by facilitating access to credit to invest in various income generating activities. It also acts as an emergency fund to cover healthcare and education costs when the most vulnerable households have the urgent need for cash.

Throughout the first quarter, VSLA implementation has been ongoing in all 17 MMDAs. In addition to training, supervising loan taking and payback, and providing supportive monitoring to previously-formed groups, district teams also actively introduced new communities and groups to the intervention. VSLAs that have not reached a full 9-12 month savings cycle, continued saving and taking loans to support their household needs for supplementary food, farming services (threshing of soybeans and maize shelling, and purchase of storage bags), and education and healthcare costs. The district facilitation teams and Global Communities RING were on hand to provide the needed technical guidance to the VSLAs during this period.

In FY18 Q1, Global Communities RING also supported district VSLA teams to conduct basic numeracy skills and record keeping training for 180 (167 women and 13 men) VSLA executive committee members and secretaries from Tamale Metropolitan savings groups. The training placed emphasis on the following: basic numeracy skills, place value, number/numeral recognition, and number writing. In addition, participants were trained on basic record keeping, including records in the passbook and the notebook, attendance checking, and loan data entry and management. Given that these Executive Members were from existing groups and already have some experiences with VSLA, the time allotted to experience sharing, challenges, and strategizing ways to address those issues was of particular interest to participants. Through this dialogue forum, they were able to raise some of their concerns and note how other groups deal with them, such as difficulty in enforcing penalties on members who come to meetings late, handing external community members that disturb savings meetings, and ensuring interest is paid back on the loans.

By the close of the quarter and the calendar year, each district had fully executed their planned VSLA activities for 2017, resulting in the formation of 282 new VSLAs with total membership of 7,990 (7,708 women and 282 men) in 132 new communities. These groups have cumulatively saved GHs 338,764 (US\$ 76,992), including interest and social funds, out of which GHs 60,250 (US\$ 13,693) was granted as loans to members to meet pressing cash needs and support investment in income generating activities. This amount saved exceeds that of FY17 Q1 first-year cohort by GHs 48,710 (US \$11070). The average amount saved by VSLAs formed this quarter was GHs 1,201 (US \$ 273) compared to an average of GHs 1,078 (US\$ 245) saved by groups formed in Q1 of FY17. The reasons for this increase in savings within the quarter are mainly due the high number of members in the new VSLAs formed for FY18 and the general good testimonies shared by members in communities on savings being a 'life saver' in critical times. This development is positive and could also mean that vulnerable households have developed the habit of savings as a strategy of strengthening themselves against food insecurity and building resiliency against poverty. Table 2 below presents the performance progress of all VSLAs formed in FY18 Q1.

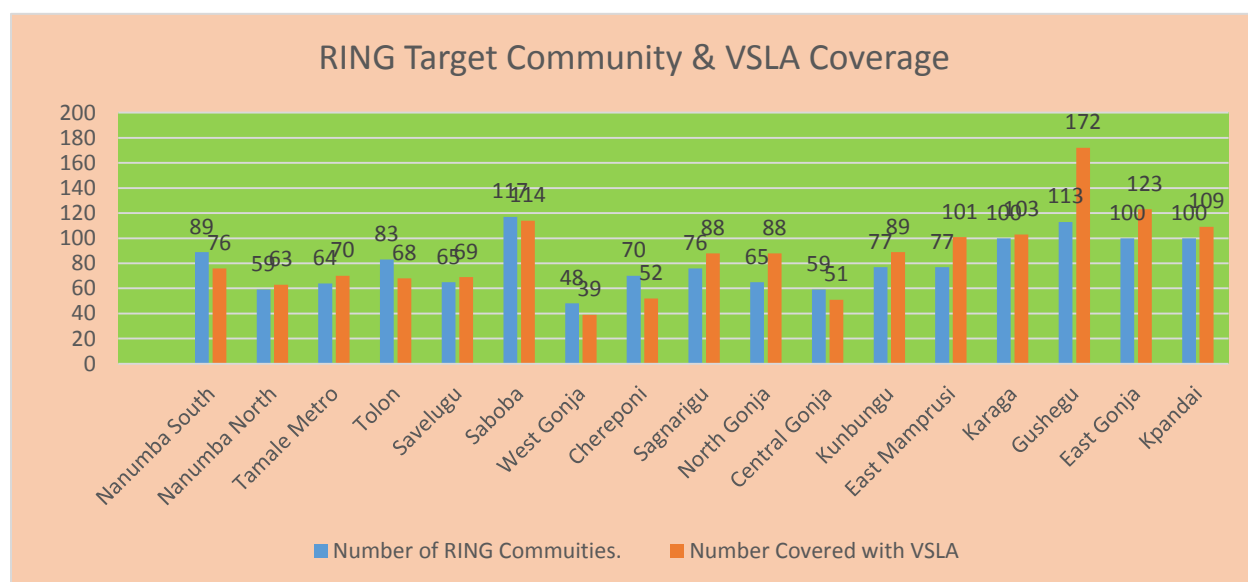
Table 2 Performance of all New VSLAs formed in FY18 (Q1)

Districts	# of Comm'ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (interest on loans + social fund)
Central Gonja	6	23	612	23,114	-	24,761
East Gonja	15	37	1,081	45,490	2,700	50,324
Gushegu	32	61	1,788	72,347	9,600	77,687
Karaga	2	5	132	8,682	2,500	9,377
Kpandai	9	21	543	37,051	8960	39247
Kumbungu	12	26	705	30,425	10,950	32,266
Nanumba North	8	27	759	3,561	550	5,561
North Gonja	2	3	95	4,725	1,300	5,320

Districts	# of Comm'ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (interest on loans + social fund)
Saboba	3	5	156	8,156	1,400	8,498
Tamale	3	5	155	2,883	-	3,120
Tolon	40	69	1,964	76,484	22,290	82603
Total	132	282	7,990	312,918	60,250	338,764

By the end of FY18 Q1, VSLA had been significantly scaled up through both the direct district implementation and through supplemental support of Global Communities RING VSLA Facilitators²³. The VSLA Facilitators strategy was employed by Global Communities RING to support the project goal of covering 100% of RING target communities and beneficiaries with VSLA. This enabled district staff (who were already adept at group formation and training) to focus on sustaining gains over the remaining life of the project through consistent monitoring of the numerous existing groups. This effort has taken 11 districts to 100% coverage of all RING communities with VSLAs. However, Nanumba South, Tolon, West Gonja, Central Gonja, Chereponi, and Saboba are left with a few RING target communities to cover. In Tolon, for instance, majority of the communities that are yet to be entered for VSLA by RING have already been entered by SPRING's team. Consequently, only four communities in the district are outstanding and are at various stages of formation process.

Figure 1 Summary by District of VSLA Coverage in RING Target Communities



The quarter also witnessed a number of VSLAs conducting share out celebrations across eight districts (see table below). As a result, GHs 2.4 million (US\$545,455) was shared-out to 5,287 VSLA members at an average of GHs 454 [US\$103] per member. The share out funds has been described as a booster for business launches by many households. These savings enables women to increase their seed capital to improve their businesses and to supplement

²³ VSLA Facilitators are short-term consultants hired by Global Communities RING to support districts with rapid scale-up of VSLA activities. They were responsible for organizing and training groups (the most time-consuming portion of the activity), initiating monitoring, and eventually handing over monitoring to district facilitation teams. This initiative was done in response to the large number of RING communities and subsequent VSLAs needed in comparison to the limited staff that districts had to manage this activity. All communities where Facilitators worked were identified by the districts themselves and they will factor all monitoring needs into 2018 AWP.

household food stocks that were at their lowest prices in preparation for the lean season when prices are usually high. This step further strengthens the resiliency of the rural households against food insecurity and food insufficiency.



Photo 1 Moinam Adisa of Namasim, East Mamprusi VSLA, took a loan from her group to start soap making enterprise

Results from share-out utilization funds show that 34% was invested in business or income generating activities (seed capital IGAs etc.), with the remaining 66% spread among healthcare, education, and agriculture activities, among others (see Table 3 below). This high percentage allocation by beneficiaries into businesses at this time of the year revealed a new trend toward small business engagement, particularly which the main investment opportunity in the Northern Region has always been farming. Also revealing is the rising use of share-out funds in other income generating activities and health. Share-out

amount received per member continued to increase, giving a good indication of the willingness of vulnerable households to save more money with each successive cycle. This gives opportunity for income diversification of the target population and opens up opportunities to invest as a result of the large sum of funds received at a time. This trend is expected to continue throughout FY18 as the project reaches 100% VSLA coverage of all RING target communities. The table below presents the summary of VSLA share-out utilization within the quarter.

Table 3 Summary of VSLA Share-Out Funds Utilization in FY18 Q1 (in Ghana cedis)

District	# of Members Participating in Share Outs	# of Groups Sharing Out	Household Allocation of Funds Received After Share-Out								
			Total Amount Shared	Health	%	Agric	%	Education	%	Business/IGA	%
Kumbungu	690	23	92,062	7,062	8%	30,000	33%	20,000	22%	35,000	38%
North Gonja	1600	60	1,740,974	292,519	17%	503414	29%	372,519	21%	572,522	33%
West Gonja	70	3	27,770	5,000	18%	5,000	18%	5,000	18%	17,770	64%
Central Gonja	56	3	15,438	2,500	16%	5,000	32%	2,500	16%	5,438	35%
Sagnarigu	18	1	2,930	500	17%	930	32%	500	17%	1,000	34%
Gushegu	1184	47	236,977	36,977	16%	50,000	21%	50,000	21%	100,000	42%

District	# of Members Participating in Share Outs	# of Groups Sharing Out	Household Allocation of Funds Received After Share-Out								
			Total Amount Shared	Health	%	Agric	%	Education	%	Business/IGA	%
Nanumba South	194	9	22,277	5,000	22%	5,000	22%	5,277	24%	7,000	31%
Kpandai	1475	56	225,634	50,000	22%	52,000	23%	50,000	22%	73,634	33%
Totals	5287	202	2,364,062	399,558	17%	651344	28%	505,796	21%	812,364	34%

Cumulative Performance of all VSLAs (Project Start to Date)

The performance of all VSLAs from the start of the project has been impressive, with eleven districts²⁴ achieving full coverage of all RING target communities. As at the close of the quarter, a total of 2,818 VSLAs have been formed, comprising 80,930 members in 1,475 communities. This achievement represents a 158% achievement on the LOP target on number of VSLAs to be formed (1,785) and 165% achievement on number of members to be reached (49,116) with VSLA intervention. These VSLAs have cumulatively saved GHs 12.1 million (US\$2.75m), representing 126% of the LOP target (GHs 9,586,037 or US\$2.18m). More than GHs 5.4 million (US\$1,227,273) representing 175% of LOP target (GHs 3,082,563, or US\$700,582) of this amount have been granted as loans to members to meet their immediate household and investment capital needs.

This achievement relative to LOP targets in the fourth year of project is attributable to the strategic introduction of VSLA Facilitators, which scaled up the intervention quite rapidly to leverage the VSLA platform to implement other key RING activities. This decision came as a result of lessons learned and observations over the last two years of implementation which indicated that, if households had access to savings, they may not be as likely to sell off additional assets too early (such as small ruminants, or soybeans or groundnuts stored up for household consumption). This would also ensure that all RING households would have at least one full year of VSLA implementation before RING funding ends. The experience of a full cycle (including share out) is vital for the sustainability of a group as the district staff responsible for monitoring can guide them through the close out and start-up the process of ending their first cycle and starting their second cycle. A complementary benefit of all households participating in VSLA is that the platform provides a strategic opportunity for engagement in key nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific activities, such as mother-mother support groups, and leafy green vegetable, orange fleshed sweet potato, and soybean cultivation. The presence of the Facilitators in the thirteen districts which were far behind with VSLA coverage (and wouldn't likely achieve full VSLA coverage until the end of 2018 at their previous pace) ensured district VSLA teams spent more time providing mentoring and technical assistance to already-formed VSLAs, while assigning communities and guiding Facilitators to undertake the cumbersome process of forming and training new VSLAs. Table 4 below illustrates the cumulative performance of VSLAs from the start to December 31, 2017.

Table 4 Cumulative VSLA performance from project start to date (by district, in Ghana Cedis)

Districts	# of Communities	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (loan interest + social fund)	Share Out Figures		
							Amount	# of Groups	# of Members
Central Gonja	51	117	3126	344155	30345	374939	72254	14	500
Chereponi	52	152	3803	443962	130544	498026	720071.26	132	3413
East Gonja	123	231	6531	767229	344988	842683	96638	19	567

²⁴ Kpandai, Gushegu, Karaga, East Mamprusi, Kumbungu, North Gonja, Sagnarigu, Tamale, East Gonja, Nanumba North and Savelugu-Nanton

East Mamprusi	101	180	4758	404575	209154	538022	222008.28	74	1853
Gushegu	172	266	7209	757617	318188	809668	333403	76	2010
Karaga	103	187	4553	473558	150994	507202	53798	12	314
Kpandai	109	184	4753	551553	146314	601806	237666	61	1623
Kumbungu	89	229	6507	766092	369004	922471	282068.5	54	1531
Nanumba North	63	143	4072	372724	232099	426510	49392	8	214
Nanumba South	76	162	4699	710470	277030	798296	118915	28	761
North Gonja	88	141	4031	788751	350740	894486	1859209	73	2057
Saboba	114	209	5677	635551	247756	716174	293710	63	1713
Sagnarigu	88	143	3997	469131	259996	629541	38448	9	251
Savelugu-Nanton	69	109	3241	799468	454515	1611141	1218142	121	3599
Tamale	70	172	8293	633743	291025	707821	60688	9	250
Tolon	68	117	3395	349094	450165	457115	620175	62	1840
West Gonja	39	76	2285	635638	1164270	811811	530355.44	46	1744
TOTALS	1,475	2,818	80,930	9,903,311	5,427,127	12,147,712	6,806,941	861	24240

Over the past three years, all 17 districts have made significant strides in mobilizing women for the VSLA intervention. The three districts that started VSLAs in 2014 (Saboba, East Mamprusi, and Chereponi) have 85 VSLAs in their fourth cycle (meaning they have completed three rounds of funds share-out and have begun their fourth round of saving as a group), with the remaining 2,733 groups in their first, second and third cycles. Though some members will opt to leave and new ones come on board, the vast majority of groups remain intact as they were originally formed. As groups further mature over time, the day-to-day district involvement decreases; the fact that these groups are still meeting and buying shares three years after starting is a strong indicator of sustainability. The tables below illustrates the performance of all VSLAs, by annual cohort, as of the close of the quarter. Please note that the 2014-2016 cohorts did not have share out data for this quarter; as of the time of the compilation of the report, MMDAs had only completed entry of the 2017 cohort into the SAVIX system. A full update on share out data will be available in the Q2 report.

Table 5 Cumulative performance of 2014 VSLAs by the close of FY18 Q1 (in Ghana Cedis)

Districts	# of Comm'ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (loan interest + social fund)
Chereponi	10	32	637	53079	3395	61708
East Mamprusi	15	30	749	41596	9204	45791
Saboba	14	23	584	33630	12005	36325
Totals	39	85	1,970	128,305	24,604	143,824

Table 6 Cumulative performance of 2015 VSLAs by the close of FY18 Q1

Districts	# of Comm'ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (loan interest + social fund)
Central Gonja	5	8	200	32322	8149	35187
Chereponi	10	37	909	76596	9000	92026
East Mamprusi	15	30	759	73615	550	93001
Nanumba North	6	12	290	36569	3570	43939
North Gonja	4	6	180	86132	33814	94767
Saboba	17	30	853	90795	35684	100524
Savelugu	6	12	355	102994	0	112986
Tolon	4	8	240	28244	15060	72340
West Gonja	12	20	587	161037	25965	182382
Totals	79	163	4,373	688,304	131,792	827,152

Table 7 Cumulative performance of 2016 VSLAs by the close of FY18 Q1

Districts	# of Comm'ties	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (loan interest + social fund)
Central Gonja	14	27	748	108067	0	118864
Chereponi	10	32	866	88599	0	99386
East Gonja	11	20	601	86055	55720	90174
East Mamprusi	18	28	774	31936	13373	38496
Gushegu	25	52	1,381	244189	4060	247053
Karaga	19	39	935	86131	17458	94765
Kpandai	15	34	874	126811	13838	140279
Kumbungu	40	72	1,959	314515	76764	353156
Nanumba North	13	24	657	114749	40840	131922
Nanumba South	4	8	219	66230	33260	74307
North Gonja	19	42	1,208	163162	34215	192592
Saboba	15	30	905	54469	15064	62248
Sagnarigu	36	54	1,455	197563	49519	240933
Savelugu	28	48	1,436	208702	104270	232452
Tamale	9	12	313	58251	30790	62922
Tolon	14	20	591	69766	33440	74967
West Gonja	10	31	951	180625	57648	216848
Totals	300	573	15,873	2,199,820	580,259	2,471,364

Table 8 Cumulative performance of 2017 VSLAs by the close of FY18 Q1

Districts	# 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
Central Gonja	26	59	1566	127110	10890	138487	15,438	3	56
Chereponi	22	51	1391	58186	9460	62630	No Share Out Conducted	No Share Out Conducted	No Share Out Conducted
East Gonja	97	174	4849	635684	286568	702185	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
East Mamprusi	53	92	2476	143508	143508	157246	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Gushegu	115	153	4040	427519	124520	469134	236,977	47	1184
Karaga	82	143	3486	363382	113136	386277	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Kpandai	85	129	3336	371000	109646	404042	225,634	56	1475
Kumbungu	37	131	3843	411133	193859	455311	92,062	23	690
Nanumba North	36	80	2366	217845	122916	245088	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Nanumba South	72	154	4480	406198	146013	466957	22,277	9	194
North Gonja	63	90	2548	439861	142993	522414	1,740,974	60	1600
Saboba	65	121	3179	297534	115845	319180	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Sagnarigu	52	89	2542	261471	129065	357427	2,930	1	18
Savelugu	35	49	1450	229920	98740	259800	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Tamale	58	155	7825	536323	245161	602825	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
Tolon	10	20	600	97082	64806	103642	NSOC	NSOC	NSOC
West Gonja	17	25	747	96866	77423	185399	27,770	3	70
Totals	925	1,715	50,724	5,120,622	2,134,549	5,838,044	2,364,062	202	5,287

From the tables above, one can note a few standout statistics. For instance, during the reporting period, a total 202 of the VSLAs formed in 2017 shared out GHs 2,446,559 (US\$556,036) to 5,437 members after completing their first cycle, while the amount saved by groups formed as at FY18 Q1 stands at GHs 5,838,044 (US\$ 1,326,828). This is an increase of GHs 4,380,127 (US\$ 995,483) over the same groups' FY17 Q1 savings of GHs 1,457,917 (US\$331,345), strong indicators that their commitment to the effort has increased and that their household economic status has improved to allow them to save the higher weekly amount. Also, for those groups formed in 2017, the average savings per member by the end of the quarter was GHs 115 (US\$26) which is more than double the average of FY17 Q1 (about GHs 50, or US\$11). The increases resulted because the number of groups formed as at Q1 FY17 were only 1,090 compared to 1,715 as at the end of the year. Additionally, this increase in savings can be attributed to the consistent visits and the quality of financial literacy education done by the VSLA teams. General performance analysis of these VSLAs undertaken by districts and Global

Communities RING shows that all the 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 have a very high likelihood of continuing, even as district monitoring support is strategically reduced.

The 2016 year groups also achieved some notable results regarding savings and loans to members during Q1. Results showed that 15,873 members mobilized GHs 2,471,364 (US\$ 561,674), indicating a savings increase of 64% over the GHs 885,433 (US\$ 201,235) saved during the same period last year. This increase is attributed to the consistent visits and the quality of the financial literacy education being done by the VSLA teams, which has been emphasized by Global Communities RING during the year.

And finally, the performance for the 2014 & 2015 year groups for savings and loans is also quite encouraging when compared to the same period during FY17. For instance, the amount saved by the 2015 year group as of FY18 Q1 was GHs 827,152 (US\$ 187,989), an increase of GHs 175,000 from the previous GHs 652,829 (US\$ 148,370) saved as of FY17 Q1. Additionally, savings from the groups formed in 2014 were GHs 143,834 (US\$32,687) for Q1 of FY18 and GHs 108,108 (US\$24,570) for Q1 of FY17, representing a 25% increase on the year.

For each of the positive trends noted above, this is a strong indication that VSLA has been fully 'bought into' as a community intervention and that, no matter how cash-strapped some households may be, they are prioritizing their weekly savings efforts. Their small loans are translating into income generation and their overall economic status has improved, enabling them to contribute more with each successive year of involvement.

Strategic Layering of VSLA with Other Interventions

Activity Highlight

VSLA: a Life-Changing Tool

Madam Ayisha of Vehekuga in Kumbungu District is a proud mother of two and housewife, as well as a member of the Pahigu Viela VSLA. Her experience in the group has been life-changing, according to her, and, in her own words, she explained:

"Belonging to the VSLA in my community is a life changing school. Now, I have nursed the habit of savings and benefitted enormously from loan services. During delivery of my second child, I was operated upon and needed GHs 200 (US\$45) to get me off the hospital bed. I was seriously challenged financially, [and without] the VSLA I don't know what I would have done. The life changing school did the trick for me.

Beyond the training on VSLA mechanics, I was schooled in: financial education, infant and young child feeding behaviors, and hygiene and sanitation. I participated in a two-day training on how to prepare six different dishes with OFSP roots: banku with OFSP leaf sauce, tuo zaafi and okro soup with OFSP leaves, OFSP drink, OFSP chips, the sliced and boiled potato, and OFSP porridge. Now, I train other women in my community on how to prepare these dishes in their households. Even though I have not gone to formal school, I am now OFSP food demonstration teacher."

Ayisha's story is just one of many testimonies to the positive effect the RING project interventions have had on her and her family. And in 2017 moving forward, each of those additional layers begin with VSLA participation, the RING foundation for poverty graduation, household resiliency, and empowered women.

The value of a household's participation in VSLA is immeasurable when it comes to calculating the impact it has on income diversification, cushioning a family from economic shocks, and providing true empowerment for even the poorest of group members. RING's VSLA also promotes strong social cohesion among the most vulnerable households (which includes women who were financially excluded and might have previously been socially marginalized) who now have a strong social support network. This unique blend of benefits is capitalized upon by RING once more by using the VSLA as a platform to introduce other interventions, such as orange fleshed sweet potato or leafy green vegetable cultivation, or even the mother to mother support group approach.

Regarding OFSP, given the positive results seen in both agriculture and nutrition in 2016,

Global Communities RING took a strategic decision in 2017 to more than double the planned cultivation from 4,735 to more than 10,000 farmers. To accomplish this, districts utilized an existing 551 VSLAs as a mechanism to distribute vines. This approach, combined with the

roughly 2.37 million vines per the district work plans results in nearly 4.15 million vines reaching a cumulative 10,979 farmers for the 2017 cultivation season. Since they were not covered by work plan support, the VSLAs leveraged their collective power and social funds to undertake land preparation, planting, and weeding of the OFSP fields. As a result, out of the 604 tons of OFSP tubers harvested, the VSLA Top Up support contributed nearly 423 tons, or roughly 70% of total tubers harvested during this crop season. More interesting is the food demonstration exercises organized for VSLAs who cultivated tubers in each community as the VSLA members also funded these community-level events. General interviews with the groups observed for quality assurance indicated a high level of appreciation for the cooking demonstration outreach; the women found the crop to be incredibly versatile, fitting well within their traditional diets. In the past, districts have complained that the budget limits of 150-300 Ghana cedis for cooking materials that Global Communities RING has placed on the cooking demonstrations to be unrealistic given the cost of items in the market and households' inability to contribute. The project's experience in 2017 went against this adage, proving that, when properly sensitized to the rationale for at least *this* key RING activity, households can come up with solutions that are appropriate for them and that are affordable for District Assemblies to manage. Due to the success of the VSLA Top Up efforts in OFSP in 2017, Global Communities RING advised all districts to factor in these changes for 2018, meaning all activities will be filtered through VSLA meetings, reducing the need for multiple additional meetings and trainings and snack and other logistical costs, and limiting the amount of time that the project requests of the participating women and their family for multiple meetings.

The VSLA platform is being leveraged in a similar way for Mother-to-Mother Support Group implementation to reach more women with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices and other positive nutrition messages. During FY18 Q1, VSLA team at the district level started working with the district health teams across the 17 districts to transform the VSLAs into M2MG. The goal is to convert all VSLAs into M2MSG by close of year 2018. Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA) and District Nutrition officers also leverage VSLA meetings to deliver important time-sensitive agricultural practices (timely weeding, harvesting) and infant and child feeding behaviors to members in VSLAs than individuals.

Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato Cultivation

Activity Summary OFSP

Training: As with all crop cultivation activities, women from beneficiary households (along with their husbands) receive basic training on land preparation (ridging), planting, field care, land maintenance, harvesting, and storage. Storage training for OFSP includes 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 is 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 carry 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 receive 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 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.

Global Communities RING Support: The technical team provides support throughout the process, as well as general monitoring. Harvest is a time-consuming part of the process, and the team support the districts in gathering yield data and providing quality assurance during utilization demonstrations. Global Communities RING is also responsible through its partnership with UDS to provide vines to all women engaged.

Global Communities RING during FY17 continued partnership with University for Development Studies, the Regional Agriculture Department, and the 17 implementing districts to plan, implement and manage the orange fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) intervention. This intervention, which is one of USAID RING's key nutrition-sensitive intervention promoted in targeted communities across the 17 implementing districts, witnessed a more than fivefold scale up in FY17 with the distribution of nearly 4.2 million of the targeted 5 million OFSP vines to over 13,200 RING beneficiaries. These women cultivated 373 acres of land in 322 communities using, by and large, the group management of farm plots for ease of access to land for such a large-scale up, and the provision of supportive supervision and harvest data documentation by the district staff. This significant scale-up was based on the strong results achieved in the 2016 farming season and positive uptake of the activity by MMDAs and the communities. Of the approximately 5 million vines produced, about 200,000 were strategically distributed to USAID IP (Ag/NRM), as well as the US Peace Corps and Moringa Connect, all in an effort to further spread the positive impact of cultivation, consumption and widespread acceptance of this nutrition-sensitive crop.

Of the remaining vines, Global Communities RING logged a total of 75,000 vines lost due to rot. This occurred during transportation of the vines from the multiplication sites to the beneficiary communities. Given the scale at which the project was operating, some challenges were encountered with the sequencing of the cutting, packing, and distribution of vines. Global Communities, UDS and the partner districts have noted these challenges to improve upon efforts in 2018.

As a result of the large scale up, in FY18 Q1, Global Communities RING team with technical guidance from UDS engaged all 17 MMDAs and their district agriculture departments to support beneficiaries to undergo timely and appropriate harvesting. The main focus of the capacity building efforts was to reduce root damage during harvest (which initiates more rapid deterioration of the root) and ensuring uniformity in weighing the tubers harvested in each community. The UDS team attended one grand harvesting event in each district to provide technical guidance to district staff and community members and also quality control during the effort, while the remaining harvests were facilitated by the districts themselves, including support to the DAD from the District Nutrition Officers (DNO), District Environmental Health Officers (EHO), and district VSLA teams. The harvesting event agendas included sensitization on appropriate harvesting, weighing, storage, and utilization for down streaming to the rest of the communities in each district. The trainings conducted by UDS highlighted the need for timely harvesting of OFSP to prevent formation of fibrous roots, disease and pest infestation, and as well as to conduct demonstrations on how to incorporate fresh OFSP into local dishes, both as complementary food for children, and a nutritional supplement for pregnant or lactating mothers.

To prolong the shelf-life of the crop by reducing spoilage at home and ensuring extended access to diversified foods for households, UDS worked with the various AEAs, as well as VSLA Facilitators and CLTS Monitors that were conscripted to support the rapid scale up (see notes in VSLA section regarding using VSLA as a platform for strategic scale up of interventions), in each district to construct local sandboxes to properly store the roots. Each of the district agents then down streamed that information to households through community visits, scheduled trainings, or VSLA meetings.

The actual harvesting was staggered over a period of three months as the fields matured in relation to the time which the vines were planted (also staggered as the multiplication took place

over several months). This resulted in harvest being completed in the last month of the quarter and calendar year. The strong emphasis on utilizing group management of farm plots in 2017 supported this effort considerably. There were some challenges faced in 2016 in obtaining accurate yields for some far-flung individual farms that did not participate in group harvests, as well as associated issues with making recommendations on harvest periods based on individual farm performance. As a result of this improved monitoring and yield documentation in 2017, in 2018, Global Communities RING will again recommend that districts utilize VSLAs, who already have the social cohesion necessary to manage a group farm, to use the collective farming approach, at least while they operate with RING funds. In addition to saving time for the district officers, women are in a better position – they can decide as a group when to carry out weeding, they can invest in plowing services on one large plot of land as opposed to preparing their own small plots on family land using manual labor.

During harvesting in a number of communities, it was observed that both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries scavenged for the remaining leaves and vines. When Musah Abdulai, one of the vine collectors in Langbina community in the East Mamprusi District, was queried on his interest in the vines, he explained, *“The OFSP leaves and vines are very good for goats and sheep, especially during the dry season when there is no feed. We collect them, bind them together and put them on rooftops to dry and feed them to the animals as supplementary feed when there is no grass. The animals consume these dried vines as soon as it is provided and drink a lot of water, making them healthier.”* Though there is a preference for the OFSP leaves to be incorporated into the human diet, there is sometimes a surplus of vines that cannot be stored for human consumption and this use as supplementary feed is a notably positive result that Global Communities RING will work with District Agriculture Departments to include in messaging to small ruminant beneficiaries as part of the crop-livestock integration efforts (crop residues to feed animals while animal manure used to fertilize farm plots).

To ensure increased consumption of OFSP among beneficiaries (particularly households new to the intervention in 2017), MMDAs, led by their Women in Agriculture Development (WIAD) Officers, and supported by DNOs and EHOs, conducted cooking demonstrations in each of the first-time beneficiary communities. Each demonstration was participatory and followed a standard script, highlighting root and leaf incorporate into local dishes, such as green leaf stew, porridge, fried chips, boiled wedges, and mashed potato stew. Messaging also included guidance on sanitation and personal hygiene when preparing and storing food, as well as the nutritional benefits of the various dishes, particularly in regards to young children and pregnant or lactating women. Some demonstrations were part of the 2018 district work plans, while the VSLAs that benefitted through Supplemental Support organized themselves and funded the activity out of pocket via their social funds and interest accrued on loans. During the cooking demonstrations, Global Communities RING officers present noted that, in most communities, the enthusiasm for the event was significant and households were genuinely interested in learning more about the way the crop could be incorporated into food. Upon tasting the various dishes, their acceptance of the crop was sealed. For instance, Soale Mariama of Kabilpe in Central Gonja District noted that, *“I did not know OFSP leaves can be prepared into stew. It tastes so nice and similar to aleefu [a type of spinach]. I will use these leaves to prepare meals for my children to eat with yam slices.”*

By the end of the first quarter, harvest results collected and compiled by Global Communities RING and district staff showed a 104% increase in total yields from 258 MT in 2016 to 526 MT in 2017. However, vine distributed and acres covered was more than tripled at 1.3 million vines versus 4.2 million vines and 105 acres versus 373 acres in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Given that 2017 was a scale-up year, the entire Global Communities RING technical team, along with

district staff, UDS staff, and Peace Corps Volunteers provided diligent technical support and timely monitoring to each of the beneficiary communities. A deeper analysis of the figures shows a trend, however, in several ‘underperforming districts.’ The majority of the farming season experienced solid rainfall which resulted in strong foliage growth and good vine establishment on most farms. However, later in the year and just after several districts had planted, rainfall became erratic – flash floods erupted in some locations followed by several weeks of drought, causing some entire fields to be wiped out. For example, districts such as Karaga, Gushegu, Savelugu-Nanton, Tamale, East Gonja, and Tolon had to contend with approximately two weeks of drought after they transplanted, thus affecting good establishment and development. Additionally, communities such as Vehikuga in Kumbungu, Naloo in Karaga, Nakpanzoo in Savelugu-Nanton, and Mabung in East Gonja recorded yields below 100kg an acre due to erratic rainfall patterns resulting in stunted tuber growth and comparatively small roots. On the contrary, heavy rains immediately after transplanting flooded OFSP fields in Kpandai and Nanumba South Districts, reducing overall yield figures. The timing of rainfall has always been the bane of farmers, particularly now as weather patterns become more unpredictable in Northern Ghana, making it difficult to plan effectively. Despite these widespread difficulties, there were positive developments from some districts’ performances. Chereponi, for instance, dramatically improved upon its 2016 performance, increasing yields from 670kg/acre 1,914kg/acre in 2017. Similar increases were recorded in East Gonja with an 88% increase (1,121kg compared to 597kg) and North Gonja with a 294% increase (1,237kg compared to 314kg). But overall, the average yield per acre decreased from 2,462 kg/acre in 2016 to 1,411 kg/acre in 2017 to due to these factors highlighted above.

The three-month long 2017 OFSP harvesting and utilization campaign was climaxed with a celebration event under the theme ‘*Improving Nutrition in Northern Ghana through Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potato – Celebrating the Harvest of 500 Metric Tons of OFSP by 15,000 Households.*’ The event was an opportunity for RING to engage and share with the project stakeholders and the media results and achievements on the promotion of OFSP cultivation, utilization, and adoption by vulnerable women farmers/households across the 17 partner districts. Project stakeholders that attended and participated in the event included District Coordinating Directors, District Agriculture Directors, District Agriculture Focal Persons, representatives of four regional departments actively involved the implementation of RING, UDS, USAID/Ghana, and a myriad of technical staff from Global Communities RING, along with representatives from eleven media houses.

Table 9 OFSP Progress by District (2016 & 2017)²⁵

District	# of Communities		# of Beneficiaries		Total Acres Planted		Vines Distributed		Total Quantity Harvested (KG)		Average Yield per Acre (KG)	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Central Gonja	8	12	293	551	13.2	34.4	167978	320,876	14,123	30,771	1,070	895
Chereponi	2	25	50	2001	2.1	35.7	30000	448,763	1,406	68,340	670	1,914
East Gonja	2	24	35	728	5.9	17.9	17700	232,499	3,524	20,066	597	1,121
East Mamprusi	4	17	175	444	8.9	14.6	101112	195,636	31,410	43,290	3,529	2,965
Gushegu	7	38	141	1021	9.4	23.7	82691	331,246	24,977	24,088	2,657	1,016
Karaga	4	13	67	1335	1.7	23.4	35400	307,479	2,737	5,385	1,610	230
Kpandai	4	22	100	521	5.0	18.7	60000	247,949	16,082	28,502	3,216	1,524
Kumbungu	3	16	90	1058	2.7	16.5	54000	243,269	18,039	58,650	6,681	3,555
Nanumba North	4	18	219	764	7.5	27.2	119587	390,080	27,226	39,652	3,630	1,458
Nanumba South	4	16	195	564	9.8	22.4	116640	194,515	31,134	16,559	3,177	739
North Gonja	2	19	23	1152	2.8	17.3	12000	204,966	880	21,405	314	1,237
Saboba	5	39	103	1078	4.9	32.4	61700	421,060	12,315	55,717	2,513	1,720

²⁵ The 2015 season was a pilot year with only 88,000 vines planted in a handful of communities and results are therefore not significant.

Sagnarigu	7	17	271	633	12.4	28.6	162600	248,461	38,744	56,649	3,125	1,981
Savelugu-Nanton	7	14	171	415	5.5	20.8	102600	70,800	8,544	10,460	1,554	503
Tamale	2	11	98	303	3.1	5.1	58800	39,482	4,246	3,093	1,370	607
Tolon	4	10	176	181	7.2	19.3	105600	79,700	14,288	13,008	1,984	674
West Gonja	2	11	51	533	2.7	14.9	30600	180,573	8,372	30,700	3,101	2,061
Total	71	322	2,258	13,282	104.8	373	1,319,008	4,157,353	258,047	526,338	2,462	1,411.1

To ensure that districts and communities drive this process and that the OFSP efforts made under RING are sustainable, the Global Communities Technical Team supported all 17 districts and beneficiaries to cut and preserve healthy OFSP vines for planting in drip irrigation sites. These preserved vines will be used as seed vines during the start of the rainy season by both the districts in their own decentralized multiplication sites (per 2018 AWP) and communities that have drip irrigation systems.



Photo 2 Fuseina Tani of Zoogiligu (East Mamprusi) makes additional income by selling OFSP vines from her backyard garden

The goal is to ensure that communities maintain access to vines all year, especially

those with year-round access to water. This is both an agricultural and economic venture as there is great potential for selling the vines to community members and in nearby markets at the start of the planting season. This is one of three strategies RING is adopting to sustain OFSP in the communities; the other two approaches are small-scale and more traditional (planting vines around the family bathhouse drain or storing healthy roots to sprout vines during the growing season), or through independent vine multipliers that UDS has established in various districts.

Though the activity was scaled significantly in FY17, some challenges were identified, such as delayed delivery of vines or land preparation, unanticipated flooding of vine multiplication sites, and inaccessibility of some locations due to poor road network. To avoid or prepare for these challenges during the 2018 farming season, Global Communities RING is strategizing with RAD, UDS, and the districts to address these issues before implementation. During Q2, all districts, via their 2018 AWP, will be supported to set up vine multiplication sites to enable timely maturation and distribution of vines for production sites. These efforts will complement the UDS-produced vines that will support beneficiaries as well. UDS has also identified 19 ideal vine multiplication sites in 16 districts²⁶ and is currently preparing to establish them as early as possible. Once vines are available sooner in the season, the likelihood that heavy, late rains will effect tuber growth is minimal. Between these three approaches and the various mitigations measures put in place to avoid previously-noted challenges, Global Communities RING has a

²⁶ No suitable, non-low-land location could be found in Sagnarigu.

target that 23 million vines will be produced in 2018, supporting 3,000 VSLAs, or roughly 75,000 RING beneficiaries.

Soybean Cultivation

Activity Summary *Soybeans*

Training: As with all crop cultivation activities, households receive basic training on land preparation, planting, field care, land maintenance, harvesting, and storage. Storage training for soybeans includes 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 emphasizes proper drying and cleaning of the seeds before putting them into the PICS sacks. Utilization trainings are 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 are 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 receive 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 household is directly supported over the course of three years. During the first year, they receive technical training, farming inputs, such as seeds and plowing support, and farming tools (boots, cutlasses, hoes, PICS sacks, etc.). During the second year, they receive only the seeds and plowing services. During the third year, all inputs donations cease and the household is successfully linked to the market in which they can purchase their own seeds. Every year, all households receive periodic monitoring.

Global Communities RING Support: The technical team provides backstopping support throughout the process, as well as general monitoring, in which quality supportive visits to the household farms are emphasized. Harvest is a time-consuming part of the process, and the team may support the districts in gathering yield data and providing quality assurance during utilization demonstrations. Global Communities RING is also responsible for procuring improved soybean seeds to subcontracted districts, as well as liaising with the Regional Seed Unit to inform them of seed needs for all G2G districts, ensuring their availability for the planting season.

Soybean implementation continued during the quarter, with beneficiaries completing the harvesting, threshing, and bagging of harvested beans planted in the FY17 cropping season. This involved the intensification of monitoring visits conducted to various target communities by Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA) and the Global Communities Technical Team to ensure timely harvesting, bagging, proper storage using the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) bags, as well as to obtain timely, accurate and reliable yield results of the activity. To ensure proper storage and reduce post-harvest losses, AEAs trained a total of 2,511 beneficiaries on post-harvest loss management, including improved cleaning and drying techniques and distributed more than 6,158 PICS bags for storage of the beans by beneficiaries. This support has ensured vulnerable households can properly store their produce and reduce losses to sometimes critically low food stores.



Photo 3 (L) District AEA delivers a PICS use training in Gbambaya, Tamale and (R) Women display the PICS bags they received through RING support

Data gathered, compiled and analyzed by the districts and Global Communities RING showed a good performance for the total yield – 1,819 Metric Tons – which exceed the RING target for the season – 1,726 MT (0.4 MT/acre) from the 4,316 acres cultivated. The data further revealed that even though there was a general decrease in average yield per acre of soybeans harvested between FY16 and FY17 across some districts, four districts recorded notable increases compared to 2016: Chereponi (106%), East Gonja (99%), North Gonja (591%), and Tolon (90%). Even though FY17 average yield dropped compared to FY16, the yield recorded by RING beneficiaries still exceeded the normal average yields of 400kg per acre without the use of inorganic fertilizers and pesticides. The strong start to the season – good rains and timely planting, high germination rates – along with diligent management of fields and adherence to good agricultural practices (GAP) observed during monitoring visits set beneficiaries up for good harvests. However, erratic rainfalls (torrential rains followed by periods of drought) when soybeans began to pod in some communities partly affected actual yields harvested. In Q2, Global Communities RING will engage with high- and lower-performing districts (particularly Savelugu-Nanton and Tamale Metro) to determine what might have been the cause, if any, outside the rainfall patterns experienced late in the year.

Table 10 Summary of Soybean Progress (2016 & 2017 Comparison) by District

District	# of Communities		# of Beneficiaries		Total # of Acres Planted		Quantity Harvested (Yield) in Kg		Average Yield in Kg per Acre	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Central Gonja	5	2	248	100	248	75	76,836.40	35,207	309.82	469.43
Chereponi	15	19	549	715	292.5	356	102,645.50	211974	350.92	595.43
East Gonja	9	11	208	332	104	166	29,298.60	58382	281.72	351.7
East Mamprusi	10	24	352	746	352	502	167,206.00	146953.8	475.02	292.74
Gushiegu	13	21	299	391	149	195.5	101,870.50	106768.5	683.69	546.13
Karaga	13	15	634	584	319	292	165,234.50	119283.2	517.98	408.5
Kpandai	15	23	338	425	169.5	212.5	101,155.00	68964	596.78	324.54
Kumbungu	9	5	569	125	284.5	125	90,149.60	44997	316.87	359.98
Nanumba North	5	10	245	500	244.5	246.5	131,682.50	83612.8	538.58	339.2
Nanumba South	13	10	569	489	544	244.5	571,182.90	99203.6	1,049.97	405.74
North Gonja	2	6	264	433	132	431	38,384.00	265495	290.79	616
Saboba	7	33	311	417	311	280.5	243,822.10	131,206.50	783.99	467.76
Sagnarigu	11	16	316	532	158	266	48,214.80	39451	305.16	148.31
Savelugu-Nanton	9	17	202	349	202	206.5	98,143.60	28258.5	485.86	136.85
Tamale	4	15	151	511	151	255	91,606.50	45968.5	606.67	180.27
Tolon	5	12	235	311	235	310	143,662.50	273263.1	611.33	881.49
West Gonja	4	9	151	305	150.5	152.5	56,357.00	51742.8	374.47	339.3
Total	149	248	5,641	7,265	4,046.50	4,316.50	2,257,452	1,810,731.30	557.88	419.49

In 2018, this activity, along with many other Component 1 efforts will reach unprecedented levels of scale. For the soybean activity, district work plans will place the activity in 361 communities (roughly one-third of RING target communities) to the benefit of nearly 12,200 households. To this regard, in Q2, the Global Communities Technical Team will provide technical guidance and support MMDAs to complete early documentation and submission of requests for approval to USAID to procure soybeans seeds. Global Communities RING will

support the consolidation of these requests to streamline the approval process for both G2G districts, and Chereponi, which remains under the subcontracted mechanism. Additionally, Global Communities will support MMDAs to strategize in the acquisition of agriculture inputs such as tractor service providers as early as possible. Early engagement will reduce pressure on the Assemblies to identify quality service providers. As all RING beneficiaries will be in VSLAs, technical guidance to beneficiaries of the soybean activity will be enhanced as messages on GAPs can be delivered much more effectively during VSLA meetings.

Groundnut Cultivation

Groundnut cultivation requires very little external inputs or intensive labor to manage. Because of that, many women in the Northern Region farm this household food staple and it has since become known as a ‘woman’s crop.’ This works to the advantage of RING as we seek to promote activities that women will have more control over and do not add undue work onto their already-stretched schedules. In addition to promoting improved cultivation practices, such as proper spacing and row planting, RING also supports households to understand that proper harvesting, cleaning, and storage is key to preventing harmful organisms, such as aflatoxins and mycotoxins, from growing on their plants.

During Q1 of FY18, nearly 3,300 women from the 8 implementing districts completed harvesting and drying after undergoing intensive post-harvest training provided by district AEAs in their respective communities. The purpose of the post-harvest training was to ensure that groundnuts were adequately dried using the ground tarpaulins provided by RING. The tarpaulin use is also considered a best practice because it facilitates better drying of pods, as well as prevents contamination during drying, which potentially causes spoilage when stored. As part of the improved storage portion of the support package, each district planned and budgeted for the distribution of PICS bags and tarpaulins to beneficiaries; data from this effort, which took place in December, is still forthcoming. However, Kpandai’s records indicate that they have distributed 2,814 bags to 203 women beneficiaries in 22 communities. Officers are still collecting and validating data on storage bag distribution from the remaining districts. These PICS bags are a simple technology that, when used properly, can reduce spoilage and prevent insect infestation, ensuring that household food stocks last much later into the year and further cushion them against the food stressors of the lean season.

Table 11 Groundnut Performance Summary

District	# of Communities		# of Beneficiaries			Total Acres Planted			Quantity Harvested in KG		Average Yield in KG per Acre	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	Total	2016	2017	Total	2016	2017	2016	2017
Central Gonja	1	4	50	348	398	50	200	250	11,800	15,452	236	77.26
Karaga	7	21	101	204	305	101	151	252	18,380	53,160	182	352.05
Kpandai	4	26	102	649	751	51	261	312	7,440	59,059	146	226.28
Kumbungu	4	10	142	195	337	142	303	445	44,945	83,777	317	276.49
North Gonja	3	5	223	280	503	111.5	448	559.5	51,176	81,197	459	181.24
Savelugu-Nanton	5	17	60	336	396	60	226.5	286.5	4,922	10,888	82	48.07
Tolon	4	14	150	157	307	150	270	420	23,755	26,276	158	97.32
West Gonja	6	5	149	150	299	150	110	260	25,831	33,139	172	301.26
Total	34	102	977	2,319	3,296	815.5	1,969.5	2,785	188,249	362,947	230.8	184.3

Harvest data compiled through intensive monitoring of Global Communities RING and AEAs on the 1,970 acres farmed indicates a 184.3kg average yield per acre, which is a decrease of 20% from the 231kg/acre average recorded in 2016. Equally, the annual yield harvest target of 465MT was missed by 22%, with an overall yield of 363,000kgs. Though significant yield increases were recorded in Karaga (93%), Kpandai (58%) and West Gonja (74%). Central

Gonja in comparison performed quite poorly, recording a 67% drop in yield per acre. In the coming quarter, Global Communities RING will conduct further investigations into why these large deviations occurred but in the interim, planting was late in most districts as a result late submission and approvals for procurement of seeds. While improvements are to be expected in the second year of implementation, such a sharp drop as noted in Central Gonja, a RING MMDA implementing multiple agriculture activities since 2014, is uncommon. Notably however, Central Gonja argued that poor soybean performance in 2016 was a justification to shift the focus of the district agriculture efforts to groundnuts; this shift resulted in equally poor results for the district and the beneficiaries, however. Kpandai, on the other hand, also opted to focus on groundnuts as soy does not historically do well in their area; they recorded a yield increase of approximately 50%.

Though district management of interventions (i.e. delivery of materials in a timely manner, provision of quality technical training and subsequent monitoring support) often plays the biggest role in the success of an activity, there are still factors outside the control of the Assembly and RING – principal among them, the weather. 2017 experienced generally good rainfall, though late in the season, the region was hammered by torrential storms and flash floods, such that several fields were completely wiped out. Global Communities RING is still analyzing where the low yields came from and determining if there is a correlation. In the meantime, however, Global Communities RING plans to fully support districts in the coming quarter to prepare the necessary documentation to obtain approval from USAID on the purchase of restricted agricultural commodities to obtain groundnut seeds. Beginning this process early will ensure districts have enough time to gather the documents required and not miss any important implementation windows when the rainy season hits.

Small Ruminants

Activity Summary *Small Ruminants*

Training: The small ruminant training module consists of a two-day engagement with the households on housing, supplementary feeding, and disease control and recognition. District staff carry out this training at the community level and with Community Livestock Workers, though more in depth, especially in providing basic medical care to animals (i.e. wound treatment, closed castration, deworming).

Follow-Up Support: Households are monitored regularly after receiving the animals, particularly in the two months immediately following distribution. CLWs are also available to support households with basic medical care, and to alert district officials if there are any emerging health issues or concerns. This general monitoring is intense during the first four months, then tapers off to gradual interaction, generally to monitor lambing, mortality and sales data.

Phase-Out Strategy: Each household receives a one-time donation of three animals. After receipt of the animals, the district provides 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 can maintain the animals on their own.

Global Communities RING Support: The technical team has previously provided a TOT and best practice information to all districts. Given the high-risk nature of the activity (due to potential mortalities and the high cost of the intervention), a member of the Global Communities RING technical team or a representative of the project is present at several key activities (i.e. receipt of the animals, quarantine inspections, distributions) to provide both quality assurance and any necessary technical information.

Global Communities and the MMDAs focus during the quarter was to strengthen the quality and frequency of small ruminant performance monitoring with the aim of reducing mortalities at the household level, particularly as the project had recorded notable success during the previous quarter at lowering mortalities during quarantine to less than 1% in 16 districts (Tamale was the outlier with notable challenges in timely procurement). Of these, ten districts recorded 0 deaths overall – a remarkable feat given the number of animals procured in 2017. With strong monitoring during quarantine in place, the next phase of improvement is to reduce household-level mortalities after the animals are distributed. The intervention relies on a household's ability to grow their herd and sell off several at a time to satisfy pressing needs; if the herd reaches a

critically low level due to unnecessary deaths, beneficiaries are not able to maximize the potential benefit of the sheep as an economic cushion.

As result, during the quarter, Global Communities RING coordinated heavily with district agriculture extension agents to conduct joint supportive monitoring to the current Community Livestock Workers (CLW) to coach them on improving the quality of services delivered to RING small ruminant beneficiaries. Observations from monitoring visits to these CLWs revealed the positive roles they play in supporting households within their catchment area to manage their animals. More importantly, the 218 CLWs (197 men and 21 women) trained in 2017 have been recognized by beneficiaries, community members, and District Veterinary Office staff as critical in the success of the intervention as they provide quality basic services (i.e. wound care and disease identification) at the community level. According to Abdulai Yaa, a beneficiary in Kulikpang community in Gushegu District, *“The training given to the community livestock worker is assisting us very well. He comes to support us on how to manage our animals every week and treats our animals when they are sick and he tells us what to do to help the animals to survive. Continue to support him to assist us.”* Yaa received 3 ewes in July and has since doubled her herd size due to her own diligent management of her flock and the support she has received from the CLW.

Partner Spotlight: Nana Yaba, CLW
Chereponi District



Community Livestock Workers play a vital supporting role in RING small ruminant efforts. Given the scale of the intervention, district officers sometimes struggle to provide the level of monitoring required to ensure the animals get off to a healthy start in their new homes. CLWs bridge that gap by providing the additional support required to identify health or management challenges early on. Through RING, they are trained in basic disease identification and control, as well as simple health services, such as wound care and treatment of parasites. CLWs are provided with a basic medical kit, as well as a bicycle to aid mobility, and can collect small fees from households for their services. Where CLWs are truly engaged, lower rates of disease and mortality follow, along with frequent communication with the District Veterinary Officer (DVO).

Madam Nana Yaba of Chabli in Chereponi District is one such CLW. Well-respected among her people, she was selected to serve in the important role as she, along with 23 other households, benefitted from the small ruminant intervention in July 2017. Armed with medical supplies, knowledge, and the backing of her community, she conducts frequent household visits to ensure the health and safety of the animals, and provide any guidance she can on best practices in animal husbandry. She explained that she, *“[S]ensitizes [owners] on how to keep the pens clean and feed the animals, and deworms the sheep, including the lambs, and takes records of births and deaths.”* She immediately reports health conditions beyond her capacity to the [DVO].

According to Naba, she felt a strong desire to give back to her community the knowledge that she had acquired and wished to support the betterment of her village. This proactive resolve has reduced mortalities in her communities and, with only 8 deaths in 6 months and nearly 70 successful births, the Chabli community performance is impressive. Growing the household herds is the goal of the intervention; ensuring that women have a ‘buffer’ supply of sheep will provide them with the assets they may need during times of economic hardship. Strong community ownership of interventions continues to be a symbol of successful RING interventions and the CLW performance is a perfect example.

During the quarter, Global Communities RING carried out a performance monitoring visit to Chereponi District to assess the performance of CLWs, the role of the DAD in monitoring their performance, and overall care of the animals by beneficiary households. The visit revealed significant improvement in DAD engagement with beneficiary households as compared to the gaps noted in previous years; it was obvious from interactions with the households that the district team was well-known in each of the communities, indicating their regular presence for the reported monitoring visits. The CLWs visited were also quite knowledgeable in the services they rendered. Although they kept notebooks with records of performance, they demonstrated retentive memories of the performance of each beneficiary household. This impressive performance of both the District Vet team and CLWs has resulted in notable achievements from

the ten communities that benefitted in 2017. For instance, of the 957 ewes distributed in the district through Global Communities RING's direct procurement support, 654 had lambed, representing a delivery rate for 68% of the animals; monitoring also noted that many of the remaining ewes were pregnant, which is common during this period of the year. There were several mortalities reported as well – 131 to be exact, comprising both ewes and lambs, many that died during the birthing process or, in the case of lambs, shortly after birth²⁷. The total number of animals in Chereponi resulting from the 2017 distributions stood at 1,238, which represents a growth rate of 26%.



Photo 4 (Top) Danando, Nanumba South District husband and wife team work collectively to manage the small ruminants received through RING and (Bottom) Fati Abukari of Paabuni, Gushegu District recorded a solid soybean harvest via RING support and invested her profits in small ruminants that she and her children care for

There is however still some isolated cases of ownership and control of the sheep among some female beneficiaries. For example, at Nachaku Village in the Chereponi District, a female beneficiary complained that her husband tried to take possession of the animals and possibly sell them to sustain his drinking habits. Even though the household heads and community members were sensitized and informed during distribution that the women are the beneficiaries and the men are to assist them to care for the animals to the benefit of the household, this came up during monitoring and was referred to the district to engage the husband on it. Global Communities RING will continue to work throughout the coming quarter and beyond to develop the appropriate gender-based strategies with the district to address this issue.

In FY17 all MMDAs aside from Tamale Metropolitan were able to distribute their small ruminants on time (i.e. before the September deadline, when seasonal diseases set in and cause large groups of animals to be more susceptible to catching them). Tamale was able to distribute 471 animals of a planned 533. The delay in the distribution resulted in 62 disease-related mortalities experienced during quarantine. Global Communities RING requested that Tamale replace the

animals to ensure the remaining 21 beneficiaries that were targeted and trained actually received the animals. The district has since procured, quarantined and distributed 40 animals to 14 beneficiaries. The remaining 22 animals for the remaining 7 beneficiaries are still

²⁷ Additionally, three ewes belonging to one woman from Lalitani #3 were stolen and three died from plastic rubbish ingestion.

outstanding. In the coming quarter Global Communities RING will follow up to ensure they are procured and distributed to close this gap from 2017. To ensure the district did not send out infected animals to beneficiary communities, Global Communities RING closely monitored and worked with the District Veterinary Officer to undertake laboratory tests which confirmed all the animals were illness-free before they were distributed. The Metro Agriculture Department also carried out a thorough disinfection of the quarantine pen to prevent future infections.

Performance monitoring data compiled and submitted by 11 of the 17 districts²⁸ indicated generally good performance, with an 11.4% increase in herd growth among beneficiaries during the quarter. Data submitted by those districts showed higher births compared to deaths with an overall of 54% lambing (13,629) against 30% deaths (8,203) among the animals originally distributed. The rate of deaths across all the districts were reported to be lower, with the exception of Savelugu-Nanton which recorded higher mortalities against births. Karaga and Saboba showed very good performance recording low death rates of five and six percent, respectively. Additionally, 8% (2,195) of animals were sold by beneficiaries to meet their pressing needs, thus cushioning households against stresses and shocks. Though data was not submitted by six districts (the reason given by the districts was the huge demand on the limited staff who were engaged in the supervision and training of beneficiaries on harvesting and storage of soybeans, groundnuts, and OFSP), the results recorded in the last quarter show a positive trend and that intensive supportive monitoring by districts and CLWs can significantly contribute to the overall success of the intervention.

Table 12 Summary of Small Ruminant Performance by District

District	# of Comm'ties	# of Beneficiaries	# of Animals Supplied	# of Lambs	% of Lambs	# of Mortalities	% of Mortalities	# of Animals Sold	% of Animals Sold	Current Status
Central Gonja	22	1,098	3,597	738	21%	729	20%	280	8%	3,326
Chereponi	21	830	2,574	1664	65%	1163	45%	206	8%	2,869
East Gonja	14	457	1,245	853	69%	580	47%	212	17%	1,306
East Mamprusi	34	1,030	3,348	2947	88%	1720	51%	134	4%	4,441
Gushegu	25	452	1,329	1512	114%	265	20%	273	21%	2,303
Karaga	19	608	1,887	322	17%	96	5%	0	0%	2,113
Kpandai	18	330	940	639	68%	320	34%	43	5%	1,216
Kumbungu	18	535	1,557	529	34%	366	24%	0	0%	1,720
Nanumba North	9	456	1,373	Data Not Available	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	1,373
Nanumba South	37	1,385	4,229	3137	74%	2042	48%	899	21%	4,425
North Gonja	20	521	1,539	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	1,539
Saboba	55	1,175	3,537	582	16%	196	6%	46	1%	3,877
Sagnarigu	16	414	1,639	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	1,639
Savelugu-Nanton	32	888	2,601	706	27%	726	28%	102	4%	2,479
Tamale	13	422	1,577	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	1,577
Tolon	33	1,050	3,130	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	3,130
West Gonja	14	497	1,789	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	DNA	0%	1,789
Total	400	12,148	37,891	13,629	53.9%²⁹	8,203	29.8%²⁹	2,195	8.1%²⁹	41,122

Based on the approved 2018 Annual Work Plans, MMDAs have more than doubled the number of animals to be procured from over 12,500 in 2017 to close to 30,000 in the coming year, reaching 8,485 beneficiaries in 260 communities. As a result, Global Communities will engage with all the MMDAs in early planning and preparation, particularly with those tasks related to the

²⁸ Six districts – Nanumba North, North Gonja, Sagnarigu, Tamale, Tolon, and West Gonja – were unable to complete full monitoring of the small ruminant activity as of the close of the quarter. Pending any extension of 2017 funds or the activation of the 2018 Implementation Letters, this monitoring will take place in FY18 Q2.

²⁹ Averages calculated for this category did not factor in the 6 districts that did not submit data this quarter, but only the 11 that did report.

procurement of restricted commodities under USAID regulations. Regarding Chereponi, in Q2, Global Communities RING will conduct a technical assessment of the district's performance in 2017 relating to their management of agriculture and livelihood activities. The results of this analysis will be shared with USAID and the region for their feedback and suggestions for 2018 funding for the subcontracted district. Though the district will maintain its subcontracted status, there may have been notable enough improvements in their management of some agricultural interventions.

Leafy Green Vegetable Production with Drip Irrigation

Activity Summary

Leafy Green Vegetables with Drip Irrigation

Training: The basic training for leafy green cultivation focuses on the set-up and maintenance of a 1,000 square meter garden plot equipped with a drip irrigation system (hose, pedal pump, water tank, drip lines and fencing) rather than cultivating the actual plants which are locally-available and well-known to women. The plots need to be situated near a reliable year-round water source and outfitted with the simple and reliable gravity-fed drip irrigation systems. Before planting their gardens, the drip kit suppliers and area mechanics conduct 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 provide 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 inputs the districts will maintain their monitoring support for a period of two to three years. Each group is (or soon will be) supported with VSLA as well, which will allow the women to maintain the low-cost drip irrigation kits when needed through a special fund set aside for that purpose as part of their own agreed upon by-laws. Because the suppliers come and do the installation and training, the women will have market relationship with the firms that can help them maintain their drip systems over time

Global Communities RING Support: The main role the technical team plays is evaluating the proposed plots for water availability during the dry season this is done to ensure that community members who may use the dam sites as a primary water source will not lose their water access should the dam dry up. The team also supports linkages from the districts to drip kit suppliers and provides regular monitoring support.

During FY17, the implementation of leafy green vegetable cultivation through gravity drip irrigation proved successful among beneficiary households in 115 communities in 15 RING implementing districts. A total of 3,847 women installed 274 drip irrigation kits and cultivated assorted leafy green vegetables (*biraa, ayoyo, aleefu*, cowpea, and bean leaves) on a total land area of 64 acres (256,000m²). This yielded a total harvest of 9,410 buckets³⁰ (31,053kg), out of which 54% (16,870kg) was consumed by households with the remaining 46% (14,183kg) sold by the women, filling critical market gaps in many rural areas. The total income generated was GHs 30,086 (US\$6,838 at a 4.4 exchange rate) by the close of the fiscal year. This income was a critical feat at the peak of dry season when income-generating activities for women (aside from food sales) are incredibly limited.

Traditionally dark leafy green vegetables (LGV) have served as a major source of micronutrients for rural households in the Northern Region, particularly for poor and vulnerable families. However, the climatic conditions (seven months of dry season) in the area deprive most rural families' year-round access to these nutrient-rich indigenous greens. As a result of the intervention, beneficiaries of Beggu community (Kumbungu) collectively described the community situation as one where their children used to become sick often, but now that the quality of their food has improved through regular LGV consumption, their health has greatly improved. This is anecdotal evidence of course, but there are strong correlations between a good diet and improved health. Notably, in addition to having several active VSLAs, Beggu is also an Open Defecation Free community through their CLTS efforts. This, too, likely has an

³⁰ A bucket of LGV weighs 3.3 kgs on average & attracts about GHC 7/bucket on the market.

impact as the overall health of the community. This is the type of positive interaction between complementary technical areas is what RING strives for in all target communities, which has fueled the push by Global Communities RING to utilize innovative approaches (i.e. Top Up Support or the use of short-term consultants for CLTS and VSLA) to cover as many communities as possible.

In FY18, MMDAs, in collaboration with Global Communities RING are further scaling up the small-scale drip irrigation activity to ensure increased availability and accessibility of nutrient-rich crops to even more beneficiary households and communities. The driving force for this scale-up is based on the positive results and impact the intervention has had on previous beneficiaries and their households, as well as the enthusiasm and commitment the women have shown for the activity. As a result, in Q1, a total of 250 drip irrigation kits and accessories were procured and distributed to 82 new beneficiary communities in 14 districts (see distribution table below) with a potential of reaching more than 3,000 new beneficiaries. This will be in addition to the 47 drip kits that were not installed in FY17 due to challenges encountered in communities with availability of water (i.e. the kits were going to be installed too late in the year). All total, 297 new kits are expected to be installed in 15 districts by the close of Q2. To enable an effective scale up, the AEAs will work with Area Mechanics³¹ to undertake community sensitization, training of beneficiaries on the installation and operations of the drip systems, as well as land preparation and management and maintenance of dry season vegetable garden plots. Emphasis during these trainings will be centered on the use of animal droppings to fertilize the soils and increased households' daily access to leafy green vegetables both for consumption and sales of surplus harvests, improving both dietary diversity and economic resilience. Alongside the installation of new drip irrigation kits, AEAs will, in the early part of the first month of Q2, engage the 115 previous beneficiary communities to reinstall the 274 drip irrigation systems installed in previous years.

Table 13 Distribution Plan for LGV Drip Irrigation Kits through Supplemental Support

District	# of Target Comm'ties	# of Target Beneficiaries	# of Drip Kits	# of Fencing Rolls	Targeted Land Area Coverage (meters ²)
Central Gonja	4	200	16	160	16,000
Chereponi	10	452	32	320	32,000
East Gonja	9	327	25	180	25,000
Karaga	3	45	9	90	9,000
Kpandai	7	300	19	190	19,000
Kumbungu	8	192	14	140	14,000
Nanumba South	7	272	27	270	27,000
North Gonja	3	332	36	360	36,000
Sagnarigu	3	115	12	40	12,000
Savelugu-Nanton	6	210	7	110	7,000
Tamale	4	128	10	100	10,000
Tolon	4	168	10	100	10,000
West Gonja	3	76	11	110	11,000
Total	82	3,037	250	2,170	250,000

By the close of the coming quarter, Global Communities RING predicts that, cumulatively, at least 570 drip irrigation systems will be fully operational in 197 communities from 15 RING districts, benefiting an estimated 6,900 women and their households, as well as the

³¹ Area Mechanics were identified, trained, and engaged for one month to fast track installation of drip systems and help monitor performance and use of the systems by beneficiaries.

communities to which they will possibly sell. To ensure the strategic scale-up is successful, periodic individual and joint supervisory monitoring visits will be undertaken by Global Communities RING and AEAs to beneficiary communities to ensure rural households have access to the needed technical guidance on the cultivation and effective management of the drip systems. Based on key lessons learned from FY17 implementation, Global Communities RING has procured and distributed the drip kits and accessories much earlier, enabling districts to begin installation as soon as the dry season set in (late in 2017). This will ensure that participating communities will undertake several rounds of harvesting and planting throughout the dry season.

AEAs will continue to work with the district VSLA teams to ensure that the LGV intervention is layered with VSLAs to guarantee maximum benefits and beneficiaries have an opportunity to save some of the income generated from the activities. Also, as part of the strategy to ensure sustainability and scalability of the OFSP intervention, Global Communities RING will coordinate with the districts during the installation and reinstallation of the drip irrigation activity to support LGV beneficiaries to target a portion of their LGV plot for OFSP vine multiplication. This will guarantee that after the harvest of OFSP tubers in the fall, communities can maintain the vines in such a way that when the rains arrive 6-7 months later households have access to vines to cultivate their own OFSP without continued external support. These communities have since been sensitized on the intervention and supported by their AEAs to access and preserve vines from OFSP fields during the harvest of the crop in Q1 of FY18.

Shea Collection and Market Linkages

During FY17, Global Communities RING provided technical guidance to eleven MMDAs to provide support to 2,073 beneficiaries in 61 communities in the implementation of the shea collection and market linkages intervention. To safeguard the health and safety of vulnerable women beneficiaries during the collection process, the districts provided each beneficiary with inputs – basins, boots, gloves, jute sacks, and weighing scales (to group of women) – to aid their collection and mitigate potential risks (snake bites, burns from fire during parboiling, etc.), and enhance the shea collection, quality processing and storage. The Assembly teams trained the women on improved nut processing to meet quality standards of buyers.

Data collected and compiled by Global Communities and MMDAs during Q1 of FY18 showed a modest 18% increase in number of bags of shea nuts collected by beneficiaries between the 2016 (4,023.5 bags) and 2017 (4,728 bags) collection seasons. There was also a general increase in quantity of bags collected across districts with average of 2.3 bags collected per beneficiary in 2017 compared to 1.6 bags in 2016. Most notably, East Gonja and Gushegu increased quantities collected by 680% and 1560% respectively, with Nanumba North's performance dropping significantly (-70%) (see the following table for a summary of progress). Both East Gonja and Gushegu attributed this increase to timelier implementation of the intervention, along with more frequent monitoring visits from the supporting Assembly staff, which in turn, translated to confidence from the women that the reported bulk sales would take place. Good prices reached during the negotiation phases also enticed women to keep more of their raw product for bulk sales this year, as opposed to selling off small portions as done in years past. Despite these gains, however, it must be noted that their 2016 performance in this intervention was quite weak as both districts implemented too late in the season, sensitizing women about the intervention after the main collection season had passed. Nanumba North's decrease is most unfortunate as they had been a strong implementer in this activity. Their attributions largely stem from the ongoing conflicts in the area, which, this year, have resulted in many women and young children being killed in the crossfire and even directly threatened.

Though several individual groups performed quite well, some were adversely affected by the conflicts, bringing down the district's overall performance.

During the reporting period, MMDA teams and the Global Communities RING technical team continued to facilitate market linkages of shea collectors to buying companies such as NEVEA Green, a subsidiary of Avnash Industries, Agrisolve Ltd., and Kassadjan Industries Ltd. to purchase from the women's groups. Each of these groups are members of Shea Network Ghana. By working in a collective, the women have better buying power for the nuts and are more attractive to buyers, who often cover transportation expenses to far away communities, making the often-difficult journeys worth their while as investors. In total, the buying companies procured 578.5 bags of dried shea nuts (valued at GHs 243,172) from 1,252 women beneficiaries in six districts (East Gonja, East Mamprusi, Karaga, Gushegu, Nanumba North and Saboba). This total represents an overall increase from 2016, this time with sales from six districts, as opposed to the two in 2016. This is a strong indication that the collector groups have increased confidence in selling through collective channels, whereas in the past, women were organized via RING support, but opted to begin selling in smaller quantities on the local markets, taking a substantial loss in comparison to what they would have earned through the group sales. This behavior is common among poor populations that may distrust if promised buyers will actually return to buy the nuts, or who are cash-strapped and cannot wait until the agreed-upon sales period. The quality of nuts has also improved among second- and third-year beneficiary groups, which bodes well for the sustainability of the group linkages to buyers after the life of the project.

When considering a buyer from a larger pool, districts use three guiding factors before presenting a pool of options to the collector groups: the credibility of the buying company, their readiness to convey nuts from each beneficiary community at their own cost, and premium price. For example, Karaga engaged and agreed on a market price of GHs70 (US\$16) with NEVEA Green and purchased a total of 107 bags from 2 of the expected 10 beneficiary communities. According to the district, this was the best price offered as their market survey indicated bags going for a range of GHs 60-65 (US\$14-15), which did not include transportation.

Despite the modest gains in income diversification and the training received in quality nut production, there is a challenge with the low quantities of bags collected per individual and a difficulty in tracking individual sales/profits from the open market (as many women often did in previous years). Average bags collected per individual in 2016 & 2017 is about three bags, which is quite low considering the time invested and the costs of inputs per individual. As noted above, many women tend to sell portions of their nuts over time, incurring costs for transport to the local markets and often taking lower prices from Market Queens who know the women are desperate to make their sales. Because of these challenges, as well as the implementing districts' tendency not to prioritize the intervention, it has been removed from the 2018 activity menu. Some districts that performed well have included some funds to monitor previously-formed groups. This approach is ideal because, regardless of the districts' presence, the women's groups now have the needed contacts to reach out for next years' sales. Additionally all the shea nut groups are now VSLAs and can still reach out to buyers during shea nut collection season.

Table 14 Summary of Shea Collection and Sales by District

District	# of Communities				# of Beneficiaries				# of Bags of Shea Collected			# of Bags Sold to GSA Buyers			Sale Value (GHs)		
	2015	2016	2017	Total	2015	2016	2017	Total	2016	2017	Total	2016	2017	Total	2016	2017	Total
Central Gonja	5	5	0	10	131	278	0	409	73	0	73	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	0	7	7	14	0	263	253	516	84.5	661.8	746.3	0	0	0	0	27,872	27,872
East Mamprusi	4	8	0	12	103	330	0	433	592	637	1,231	283	331.5	614.5	25,470	16,760	42,230
Karaga	0	5	10	15	0	85	212	297	133	887	133	0	711	711	0	17,430	17,430
Gushegu	0	2	9	11	0	56	193	249	30	499	529	0	35	35	0	24,780	24,780
Kumbungu	0	0	6	6	0	00	327	327	0	319	319	0	35	35	0	0	0
Nanumba North	11	20	13	44	402	932	500	1,834	2,976	906.2	3,882.2	2,147	0	2,147	214,700	142,980	357,680
North Gonja	2	3	0	5	164	143	196	503	0	998	998	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saboba	0	0	2	2	0	0	94	94	0	467	467	0	177	0	0	13,350	13,350
Savelugu-Nanton	0	13	7	20	0	354	137	491	135	249	384	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tolon	0	0	4	4	0	0	92	92	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Gonja	0	3	3	6	0	100	146	246	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	22	66	61	149	800	2,541	2,150	5,491	4,023.5	5,943	8,762.5	2,430	1,269.5	3,719.5	240,170	243,172	483,342

Poultry Pilot Progress

During Q1, four out of the five poultry implementing districts (Nanumba South, North Savelugu-Nanton, Tolon and West Gonja) had completed the review of their budgets, which were initially tailored toward support to individual households to reflect that of the collective management strategy. The districts also completed preparatory activities including the training of CLWs and construction of poultry houses; some medication and feed procurements have also been lined up in preparation for their arrival. Within the same period, Global Communities guided the MMDAs to complete the documentation and submission of requests from USAID to obtain approval for procurement of restricted agricultural commodity (breeding livestock). These requests were approved by USAID late in December, requiring districts to request short extension of their 2017 implementation letters, which would enable them to procure the birds to complete the poultry intervention.

North Gonja, a subcontracted district that received approval much earlier in the year, began the intervention this quarter with the purchase and arrival of 517 day-old-chicks for the Tidrope community. Birds are currently in their 14th week (anticipated egg-laying period is some time after the 24th week) and the district veterinary team has appropriately vaccinated and medicated each bird. Monitoring visits indicate strong adherence to quality guidelines and the Tidrope women have divided up the feeding, watering, and cleaning duties for the poultry house. The birds themselves have performed quite well, growing much more rapidly than initially planned; by the time they had reached the 7th week they were shifted to the grower house a week or two early. There have been minimal sporadic deaths, which is not uncommon in young birds. However, the largest group (20) died late in the quarter due to suspected suffocation after a particularly cold evening (birds often huddle together for warmth, and some were inadvertently crushed). The women's group quickly addressed the issue by adding more coal pots and covering the screened windows at night, making the place much warmer for the birds. Since that period, no mortalities have been recorded and the current number stands at 479.

Districts implementing the individual household approach from 2016 still conduct regular monitoring, but are unable to collect complete data sets for comparison purposes as the women have a difficult time tracking egg laying performance and mortalities of the free-range birds. Only Savelugu-Nanton was able to report on their 2016 performance (see table below), which indicated that there had been 612 mortalities to date, but with significantly higher hatch as well, the current stock stands at 1,615, compared to the starting figure 1,070. In Nasamba, women have been tracking performance of the birds over time and, noting a decline in egg production, opted to sell the remaining fowl before food costs outweighed the income from the eggs. They first divided a portion of the birds among themselves (3 per woman for a total of 42), and sold the remaining 150 at GHs 15/bird (US\$3.5), a good price on the local market. This generated GHs 2,250 for the group, or just under US\$500.

By the 78th week of production, just before the birds were sold, the women had collected a cumulative total of 68,110 eggs (2,270 crates), at an average of 192 eggs (6 crates) per day. To improve the nutrition of participating households, particularly children under five, the group allocated 25% of the eggs, or just over 17,000 eggs, to each woman, while the remaining eggs were sold to raise income for the group. The average eggs each woman received in total from the start to the sale of the birds for home consumption stood at 1,216. The women generated approximately GHs 13,803 (US\$2,068) from egg sales and currently have deposited GHs 11,355 (US\$3,025) as savings in the group bank account. This money will be used to fund the start-up of the second round of bird and feed purchase in the coming quarter.

In a bid to sustain the activity, in the coming quarter the Nasamba women’s group will be supported by the Assembly to build another grower pen to enable them to stagger the rearing of two streams of birds at a time. The first stream of birds is expected to be procured in the last month of Q2. Per the 2018 draft regional work plan, the Regional Agriculture Department will facilitate a lessons learned forum, highlighting information gleaned from this key phase of implementation will inform other districts on the best strategies.

Table 15 Summary of poultry status by district (2016 efforts)

District	# of Comm'ties	# of Women	# of Birds Procured	# of Deaths	Current # of Birds	Type of Bird
Central Gonja	2	44	556	Not available	Not available	Local Fowls
Nanumba South	1	14	300	98	202	Day Old Chicks
Savelugu-Nanton	6	123	1,230	612	1,615	Local Fowls
Tolon	8	251	1,798	Not available	Not available	Local Fowls
West Gonja	2	47	1,249	Not available	Not available	Day Old Chicks
Total	19	479	5,133	710	1,817	

Bee Keeping Pilot

During the quarter, Global Communities and the West Gonja District Assembly, through its DAD and Department of Community Development, continued to provide supportive monitoring to strengthen the organizational capacity and technical competency of two women’s groups (in Canteen-Damongo and Larabanga) to care for apiaries that had been provided to them approximately nine months ago. Midway through the year, Global Communities RING together with the Assembly noted some gaps in monitoring ownership of the intervention, which ultimately led to maintenance challenges of the hives by the Larabanga women’s group. Through close discussion and more deliberate coordination, technical support for the intervention is back on track and women are properly managing their hives, protecting them against pest infestation and overgrowth of weeds in the surrounding areas.

These groups also function as VSLAs, which lends the perfect platform for discussing any technical issues with hive management. While the Canteen-Damongo group had demonstrated strong commitment and general group cohesiveness, the Larabanga group was struggling, as was previously reported. Through district and Global Communities RING monitoring and supportive supervision, the group’s management of their hives has greatly improved in the last quarter. Each of the 15 members are involved, taking turns to provide care and management of the hives. According to the Local Beekeeping expert (Seidu Pasor) who provides them with technical guidance in management of the hives, *“The women are now very serious on the field and respond to anything required for the effective management of the hives.”*

To address the monitoring gap, the Larabanga group intended to safely move the hives to another, and began with the transport of five of the fifteen apiaries. This, however, was suspended after the group realized that relocation may negatively affect the production of honey. The change of location meant a change in the worker bees’ dynamics – they would need to locate a new nearby source of nectar and become accustomed to new environment. The remaining ten hives will now be moved in Q2 after the honey is harvested

The group in Canteen-Damongo, however, continued to consistently demonstrate ownership of the intervention and commitment to management of the hives through their scheduled monitoring and cleaning checks at the hive locations. Supportive monitoring visits showed that

the bees are actively producing honey; based on the current levels and the onset of the cold, dry weather, the group has determined that January-February will be an ideal harvesting period.

In the coming quarter, Global Communities will continue to work closely with the district to support monitoring efforts and provide technical guidance to the beneficiaries on honey harvesting and guide them to harvest, process and sell the honey.

4.2. Component Two

Component 2a – Nutrition

Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households

RING promoted the adoption of positive nutrition behaviors through a series of systematic activities at the community and facility-levels. FY18 Q1 witnessed significant achievements in the implementation of nutrition activities against Q1 planning, made possible by the increase in the number of nutrition activities included in the MMDA AWP, per their scheduled timelines.

The primary focus for the period was to provide continuous technical support to the implementing districts in order to achieve all targeted activities established in their 2017 AWP. These included trainings in: anemia prevention and control (APC), Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM), Community-Based Infant and Young Child Feeding (C-IYCF), and C-IYCF Support Group trainings, also known as mother-to-mother support groups (MTMSG), for group leaders and Community Health Volunteers (CHV). Other trainings included Quality Improvement (QI), on-the-job training (OJT) in nutrition commodities management for health workers (HWs), and Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) for non-health workers. Further activities included lesson sharing sessions and the roll-out of an advocacy video on stunting, Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) strengthening, monitoring, supportive supervision, and coaching visits. Other activities targeted communities directly, such as community nutrition durbars, stunting advocacy video screenings, and cooking demonstrations.

Summary of Activities Implemented during FY18 Q1

During the quarter, RING made a major effort to support Ghana Health Service (GHS) to equip critical health staff in a number of areas, particularly in regard to training on certain approaches. For instance, to better support the community-level nutrition education outreach, Global Communities RING, in close collaboration with GHS, identified and on-boarded 17 monitors to support full scale rollout of MTMSG in all RING partner communities. This strategy will support efforts to overlap VSLAs with the MTMSG curriculum, and ultimately strengthen community nutrition activities, while engaging with targeted households. In addition, the Nutrition Team supported District Health Management Teams to carry out a number of additional critical exercises to ensure each district health team has a well-trained staff to support the outreach and service delivery required of them. The table below provides an overview.

Table 16 Summary of Nutrition Trainings during the Quarter, by Topic

Activity ³²	OJT	Anemia	QI	C-IYCF	CMAM	Outreach Planning	Stunting Adv. Video
HW	128	151	249	180	105	20	17
CHV	N/A	0	N/A	296	66	N/A	N/A

Anemia Survey Report

Following intensive trainings of health staff in APC conducted by SPRING, RING and Systems for Health (S4H), Global Communities RING conducted a survey in FY17 with two main objectives: 1) assess gaps in anemia prevention and control during antenatal care (ANC) visits in selected health facilities in the Northern Region; and 2) identify gaps in the commodity supply chain. The preliminary report and presentation have been shared with GHS and USAID and have since received comprehensive feedback from USAID. Global Communities RING is finalizing the overall report incorporating USAID feedback, and will work with GHS to disseminate findings to targeted districts and implement corrective measures to strengthen APC efforts.

Capacity Building for Health Workers and Community Health Volunteers

On-the-Job Training (OJT) in Commodity Management

In FY17, Global Communities RING supported all districts to purchase shelves and train strategic staff in commodity management. GHS District Nutrition Officers (DNO) cascaded this training to all facilities in their catchment areas, with support from Global Communities RING. These trainings use an OJT methodology consisting of an eight-hour curriculum conducted in the facility where staff are employed. The objective of the training was to develop health workers' ability to understand the purpose of a logistics system, use job aids to perform logistics management procedures, complete bin cards, complete the integrated Report, Requisition, Issue and Receipt Voucher (RRIRV), and understand the schedule of and relationship between reporting, requisitioning, and commodity delivery. These trainings targeted staff responsible for store management activities, but facilitators also invited other strategic staff, if available, to participate to further strengthen facility capacity.

During FY17 and FY18 Q1, all 17 districts under RING budgeted to procure shelves and conduct OJT in Commodity Management. With the exception of Tolon (which under-budgeted for shelf procurement and will complete procurement in Q2) and Gushegu (which noted the gap and prioritized its inclusion in their 2017 subcontract extension), remaining districts with pending activities completed efforts in FY18 Q1. During this quarter, 128 HWs received OJT in commodity management, and as a result of OJT in Commodity Management efforts in 2017, in most districts, HWs are now required to fill and/or update all bin cards before proceeding to the next request. In several districts, most facilities are using worksheets to forecast commodity needs and maintain their stock level in a good range. These are key steps in ensuring accurate and systematic management of commodities. Districts incorporated the OJT on commodity management into their Q1 monitoring activities, and it has been reported that most facilities have maintained good storage conditions for nutrition and health commodities since receiving

³² Not included in the table is Essential Nutrition Action Training and MTMSG. 190 non-health staff at the district were trained in ENAs, while 721 MTMSG group facilitators (non-GHS staff as well) were also trained.

their OJT. These are all positive signs that the achievements made during the OJTs will be sustained as part of the day-to-day management procedures at the health facilities concerned.

Despite these successes, the time consuming nature of this OJT activity has been identified as a challenge. As many facilities do not have a designated store keeper, the same staff provide routine services while also participating in the training, which sometimes disrupts routine service delivery to waiting patients. During FY18 Q1, experiences from Sagnarigu and Kpandai were shared with other districts implementing this activity, particularly how the stock room managers would not dispense commodities without first reviewing the appropriate bin cards. This encouraged the health staff to prioritize filling out the bin cards consistently and correctly. While initially it may have taken more time, the adherence to correct procedure has improved service delivery over time.

Table 17 Nutrition Commodity Management Training Summary (On-The-Job) by District

Districts	# of HWs		
	Female	Male	Total
East Gonja	22	38	60
Kumbungu	12	8	20
Karaga	7	11	18
North Gonja	7	16	23
Nanumba South	2	5	7
Total	50	78	128

Anemia Prevention and Control Training for HWs and CHVs

During this quarter, RING continued to conduct targeted capacity building of HWs (three-day training) and CHVs (one-day) on APC. The curriculum aims to build capacity and provide a more comprehensive approach to anemia control interventions. The training for HWs is focused on proper use of HemoCue device for testing, how to properly capture data in the record books, routine supplementation for pregnant women and children, and counselling; the training for CHVs is focused on community-based identification, referral, and community-based management. HWs targeted during the training included Community Health Nurses (CHNs), Enrolled Nurses, Midwives, Health Assistants, Staff Nurses, Nutrition Officers, and Field Technicians. During this quarter, 4 districts trained 151 HWs.



Photo 5 Facility storeroom at Wulensi Health Center before (left) and after (right) an OJT in commodity management

Beyond these trainings, District Health Management Teams (DHMT) conducted technical support visits (TSV) to facilities to mentor and coach staff on anemia activities. Those TSVs indicated that the trainings increased awareness among community members on the causes

and prevention of anemia among pregnant women and children, identification and referral of such cases, as well as counselling of pregnant women on taking iron folic acid (IFA).



Photo 6 Demonstration on the use of the HemoCue device by HWs during an anemia control and prevention training at East Gonja District

However, some HWs are still challenged with adhering to the management protocols for anemia in pregnancy (specifically testing and correct dosage of IFA, counselling, and referring as needed). As part of the FY18 strategy, Q2 will focus on improving service delivery. Global Communities RING will work jointly with the district to provide a half-day OJT refresher training, followed by monitoring and coaching. Mobile technology will also be used to enhance supportive supervision and provide automatic feedback to ensure adherence to the anemia protocols to help prevent and control the high prevalence of anemia in these districts.

Table 18 Summary of Anemia Trainings by District

District	# of HWs Trained in Anemia		
	Female	Male	Total
East Gonja	14	11	25
Gushegu	17	15	32
Saboba	18	28	46
Savelugu	35	13	48
Total	84	67	151

Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) Training

During FY18 Q1, only two districts – West Gonja and Kumbungu – conducted CMAM trainings of HWs and CHVs, with a total of 51 HWs and 66 CHVs reached, respectively. HWs received a four-day CMAM training to build their capacity to provide outpatient care and treatment for severe acute malnutrition cases (SAM). CHVs received a one-day training to provide them with the requisite skills and knowledge to prevent, identify, and refer cases of malnutrition to prevent SAM complications at the community-level. All CHVs trained were equipped with CMAM picture booklets and Mid/Upper-Arm Circumference (MUAC) tapes, which have resulted in an increase in active cases and referrals of cases. In addition, the NRHD conducted a top-up training in CMAM for 60 strategic staff across multiple districts.

Although all 17 districts have completed CMAM training planned for 2017, Global Communities RING realized that some critical staff remained untrained due to recent staff turnover and frequent on-boarding of new health workers. Though these circumstances can never truly be avoided, maintaining an adequately trained health force is paramount to ensuring consistent and quality service delivery. In an effort to address the gaps, Global Communities RING recommended that all districts update their nutrition training tracker to correctly target those who need to be trained, starting FY18 Q2 via the NRHD portion of the Regional AWP for RING. To

ensure strict adherence to quality improvements, Global Communities RING continued to provide technical assistance to districts to monitor and provide supportive supervision.

CMAM trainings have resulted in significant improvement in the overall CMAM program in all districts according to DNOs. However, adhering to some of the protocols and completion of the CMAM Out-Patient-Care (OPC) treatment cards continues to be a major challenge for some HWs, especially newly-posted staff. This will require continuous supportive supervision and coaching of these HWs to achieve full compliance. Overall, training of HWs has contributed to an increase in case detection, and consequently increased caseloads and improved adherence to CMAM protocols. Sub-districts have achieved about 75% coverage of both frontline HWs and active volunteers in CMAM, and therefore have a critical mass of workforce for CMAM activities.

Table 19 Summary of CMAM Trainings by District

Districts	# of HWs Trained in CMAM			# of CHVs Trained in CMAM		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Central Gonja	6	0	6	-	-	-
East Gonja	8	5	13	-	-	-
East Mamprusi	2	2	4	-	-	-
Kpandai	1	5	6	-	-	-
Kumbungu	10	3	13	5	61	66
North Gonja	3	4	7	-	-	-
Saboba	5	6	11	-	-	-
West Gonja	26	25	51 ³³	-	-	-
Total	61	50	111	5	61	66

Community-Based Infant and Young Child feeding (C-IYCF)

C-IYCF trainings are conducted for HWs and CHVs to augment integration efforts to improve IYCF practices. The trainings typically last five days and are largely practical, with pictorial and interactive sessions. Health Workers at the apex of service provision had both facility and community-based field trips to facilitate training, growth monitoring, and targeted counseling. The 180 HWs participating in the training included CHNs, Field Technicians, Midwives, Staff Nurses, DNOs, and Enrolled Nurses. Additionally, 296 CHVs participated in variations of the training, which strengthened their knowledge of recommended IYCF practices, built their capacity to provide targeted nutrition counseling to community members, and enhanced their ability to support HWs in Child Welfare Clinic (CWCs), outreach clinics, and home visits.

All 17 districts conducted C-IYCF trainings as planned during the FY 2017 implementation period. However, Global Communities RING subsequently supported all districts to conduct supplemental trainings across the districts to address large gaps in untrained health workers. Global Communities RING recognized through field visits and interactions with DHMT that a number of critical staff, including newly-posted staff and old staff, were still not trained in the approach. To reach some of these officers, the NRHD with RING support, conducted supplemental trainings during the quarter for 50 HWs across districts in the catchment area. Global Communities RING also recommended that all districts update their personnel training tracker to correctly target those who needed training via any future endeavors. To ensure

³³ Only West Gonja conducted training for HW at the district level; remaining staff were trained by NRHD through their planned Top Up Training support.

adherence to quality improvements, Global Communities RING continued to provide technical assistance to districts to monitor and provide supportive supervision to facilities.

C-IYCF trainings have resulted in significant improvements in the C-IYCF program in all districts, as almost all health facilities are routinely providing targeted counselling during CWC and sometimes during ANC visits and are completing recordings in the C-IYCF register. HWs who previously had challenges with correctly and completely filling growth charts in the Child Health Records Book (CHRB) or completing the C-IYCF registers are now able to completely and correctly fill them in. Some HWs still have challenges in correctly completing the C-IYCF support group register, especially the newly posted staff. To address this deficiency, both DHMT staff and Global Communities RING Nutrition Officers provided additional coaching on the correct procedures during TSVs.

Table 20 C-IYCF Training Summary by District

District	# of HWs Trained in ICYF			# of CHVs Trained in IYCF		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Central Gonja	28	7	35	0	0	0
East Gonja	3	3	6	0	0	0
East Mamprusi	23	21	44	0	0	0
Kpandai	0	0	0	2	40	42
Nanumba North	0	0	0	4	46	50
Nanumba South	0	0	0	7	68	75
North Gonja	3	4	7	19	53	72
Saboba	9	16	25	0	0	0
Sagnarigu	25	6	31	16	34	50
Savelugu-Nanton	5	2	7	0	0	0
West Gonja	21	4	25	0	0	0
Total	117	63	180	53	243	296

Data Utilization and Outreach Planning Trainings

These trainings focused on improving the quality of outreach visits, including CWC outreach visits conducted by HWs, as well as the utilization of facility-level data, which is used to inform early troubleshooting and correction before forwarding data to the next level. The objective of the training is to build HWs' capacity to conduct community outreach that reaches more communities with relevant health topics, while the data utilization training seeks to improve HWs' skills in using data for decision-making by paying close attention to the data collection process. Data utilization trainings have helped shift HWs' perceptions of data from an exercise that is only important for reporting to a tool that can be used to improve service delivery. During the quarter, only Chereponi organized a one-day Outreach Planning training for 20 HWs (14 women, 6 men).

Quality Improvement (QI)

Global Communities RING supported all districts to conduct multiple QI activities during the quarter. QI uses facility data to identify gaps in service delivery, and then brainstorm and implement changes to address those gaps. Each facility QI team is assigned a trained QI coach to provide mentorship and coaching; in most facilities, the In-Charge is the health staff trained as the coach. Coaches organize monthly team meetings at the facility level, while quarterly

learning sessions and annual reviews (harvest meetings) are conducted at the sub-district and district levels, bringing together multiple QI teams for learning and experience sharing.

As a new activity, QI implementation has been slow in 2017 compared to district work plans and their original implementation schedules. However, Global Communities RING is conscious that QI can be one of the best sustainable interventions in nutrition – aside from training, costs are minimal, and the approach is facility-specific and facility-driven, requiring very little external support. In support of the effort, Global Communities RING has engaged a QI Specialist to provide additional support to all RING districts during the full roll out. All districts have completed trainings (Coaches, In-Charges, and Teams) and are conducting monthly meetings, while four districts have begun holding learning sessions. Global Communities RING is actively following up on district progress to ensure all districts quickly complete the first cycle of the activity and continue with the remaining cycles.

All teams reported a positive improvement during the quarter, and it was observed that teams have a good understanding of the principles of the intervention and are able to apply those principles to generate improvement in health service delivery. During the various engagements, all QI teams were able to document and share positive data on gaps that were identified and improvements implemented. It was also noted that teams were meeting regularly, documenting evidence of meetings, and acting appropriately on the decisions taken during meetings.



Photo 7 Health staff presenting time series during a QI learning session in Kpandai District

In FY18 Q1, Global Communities RING supported Nanumba South to re-identify and train nine QI Coaches. The training became necessary to support QI activities in the district following turnover of most of the initially-trained Coaches. Two districts (West Gonja and Chereponi) also started and completed all stages of the QI trainings (Coaches, In-Charges and Teams trainings) in the quarter of review and are now conducting their monthly meetings. All total, 12 districts carried out QI activities during the quarter, though final reports from Kumbungu, Nanumba South, and Saboba were not available as of the time of reporting. Overall, there are 239 QI teams that have been formed in RING partner districts, covering 86% of health facilities. Now that QI team trainings have been more or less completed, Global Communities RING will focus on providing support to the DHMT to ensure that each team actively conducts meetings and implements the appropriate follow up actions based on their change ideas.

Table 21 QI Progress Summary by District

District	# HW Trained (as Coaches, In-Charges or Team)			# HW Participating in Learning Sessions			# of QI Teams per District	# of Health Facilities per District
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	Total	Total
Central Gonja	39	82	121 ³⁴	0	0	0	19	19
Chereponi	20	24	44 ³⁵	0	0	0	10	13

³⁴ Central Gonja - all were team members trained.

³⁵ Chereponi, - 6 were coaches -11 were in-charges and 26 were teams members trained

District	# HW Trained (as Coaches, In-Charges or Team)			# HW Participating in Learning Sessions			# of QI Teams per District	# of Health Facilities per District
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	Total	Total
East Gonja	0	0	0	26	11	37	14	15
East Mamprusi	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	35
Kpandai	0	0	0	22	16	38	26	22
Kumbungu	0	0	0	Data Not Available	DNA	DNA	13	16
Nanumba North	0	0	0	8	8	16	16	16
Nanumba South	3	6	9 ³⁶	0	0	0	11	10
North Gonja	11	30	41 ³⁷	0	0	0	12 ³⁸	7
Saboba	0	0	0	Data Not Available	DNA	DNA	25	36
Sagnarigu	0	0	0	18	12	30	13	13
Savelugu-Nanton	0	0	0	8	12	20	10	21
Tamale	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	15
Tolon	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	35
West Gonja	12	22	34 ³⁹	0	0	0	25	26
Total	85	164	249	82	59	141	238	276

Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA)

Capacity Building for Non-Health Sector Staff

Given the integrated nature of RING and the root causes of many nutritional ailments, non-health sector staff play a critical role in ensuring nutrition activities are adequately supported at the district and community levels. Building capacity of these staff creates a strong platform for all nutrition activities to be integrated into many routine service delivery channels of the Assembly. As part of scaling up nutrition education at the community level, other government staff are trained on the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENAs) to build their capacity to integrate ENA key messages into their routine community activities. These departmental staff include School Health Education Programme (SHEP) Teachers, Environmental Health Officers and agents (EHO), Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA), Community Development and Social Welfare Officers (CD/SWO), and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA). The trainings emphasize the multi-sectoral nature of addressing malnutrition and the complementary ways in which each technical sector can effect positive change within their work stations or communities. As is standard, during each of the trainings, participants developed action plans that defined how they would integrate nutrition into their routine activities. For instance, while EHOs indicated disseminating the ENA messages during CLTS monitoring, TBAs indicated disseminating ENA messages during outdoorings and bathing of newborn babies.

This is one of the activities that have proven successful, as all monitoring and supervision visits to both the field and offices have indicated that trained non-health staff are actively disseminating key ENA messages to community members through VSLA meetings, bi-monthly Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) beneficiaries' payment meetings, community and household sanitation inspections, school Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and numerous other venues. Interaction with community members during monitoring visits confirms that key ENA messages have been shared with them as they display a strong general knowledge of the curriculum. As a next step to seal this knowledge, Global Communities RING

³⁶ Nanumba South – all were coaches trained.

³⁷ North Gonja – all were team members trained.

³⁸ The district is currently in the process of building more CHPS compounds; once the facilities are fully functional, the trained QI teams will begin operating from there.

³⁹ West Gonja – 10 were coaches, and 24 were in-charges trained.

technical staff will continue to work with the districts to ensure that participants are monitored toward achieving their written action plans. The team will also continue to monitor key behaviors adopted by communities as a result of being reached with key ENA messages. During previous quarters, most districts completed their ENA training – in FY18 Q1, Nanumba North and Chereponi conducted ENA training, while others conducted monitoring visits.

Table 22 ENA Training Summary by District and Participant Designation

District	SHEP			AEA			EHO			TBA			Total		
	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T
Chereponi	3	44	47	0	0	0	3	6	9	0	0	0	6	50	56
Nanumba North	9	41	50	1	14	15	5	10	15	54	0	54	69	65	134
Total	12	85	97	1	14	15	8	16	24	54	0	54	69	65	190

Cooking Demonstrations

RING uses cooking demonstrations at the community level to educate caregivers on dietary improvements by including soybeans, OFSP, and leafy green vegetables, such as *ayoyo*, *aleefu*, *biraa*, and moringa, into various traditional meals. They also support complementary feeding efforts for children 6-23 months and maternal nutrition for pregnant and lactating women. Sessions are conducted in a practical and integrated manner to include DNOs, Women in Agricultural Development (WIAD) officers, and EHOs, ensuring that messages incorporate hygiene and food safety education, as well as nutrition and agriculture education.

During the reporting period, RING reached nearly 23,000 community members within 285 communities across 17 districts through this intervention. Mini-durbars are organized after the meal preparation to describe how the meals are prepared and highlight hygiene and sanitation issues to prevent contamination of foods and infections in children. This was identified as a priority by DHMTs and included in their 2017 AWP. Key messages on the consumption of protein and vitamin A-rich food, with emphasis on soy fortification and consumption of OFSP, were highlighted at each session. DNOs, WIAD Officers, and EHOs co-facilitate the sessions. Tippy tap construction and demonstrations continued as part of the EHOs' education session on basic hygiene, sanitation, and food safety. This key integrated community-level intervention for districts directly targets households with hands-on knowledge of utilizing and incorporating nutritious crops (particularly soybeans and OFSP) into local dishes.

Global Communities RING uses cooking demonstrations as a pathway to integrate Nutrition, Livelihoods and WASH into one package; Governance strengthening comes into play as it is GOG staff that jointly and directly plan, facilitate, and lead monitoring efforts for the intervention. As part of the FY18 strategy, cooking demonstrations will continue to be an integrated activity, with all components working closely together. The priority for this fiscal year will be to monitor this activity at the household level to encourage sustainability of positive nutrition behaviors.

Table 23 Cooking Demonstration Summary by District and Participant

Districts	# of Events	# of Active Participants (by Sex)			# of Observers (by Sex)			Overall Total
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
Central Gonja	7	0	128	128	105	125	230	358
Chereponi	16	26	1401	1427	186	96	282	1709
East Gonja	27	45	869	914	119	85	204	1118
East Mamprusi	19	180	655	835	386	303	689	1524

Districts	# of Events	# of Active Participants (by Sex)			# of Observers (by Sex)			Overall Total
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	
Gushegu	42	229	1192	1421	137	145	282	1703
Karaga	16	4	408	412	224	352	576	988
Kpandai	27	147	1088	1235	466	764	1230	2465
Kumbungu	5	14	95	109	38	55	93	202
Nanumba North	33	340	1973	2313	291	403	694	3007
Nanumba South	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Gonja	23	1855	2118	3973	53	68	121	4094
Saboba	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sagnarigu	22	61	812	873	414	554	968	1841
Savelugu-Nanton	22	39	810	849	133	153	286	1135
Tamale	0			0	0		0	0
Tolon	45	140	959	1099	557	1923	2480	3579
West Gonja	4	0	176	176	0	0	0	176
Total	308	3080	12684	15764	3109	5026	8135	23899



Photo 8 (L) A community member stirs soy fortified "Tuo Zaafi" during a cooking demonstration in Nanumba North District; (R) Different recipes showcased during the demonstration are presented.

Dissemination of Stunting Advocacy Video

As part of RING's strategy to reduce stunting, Global Communities RING adopted the stunting video developed by USAID/SPRING-Ghana, titled "*When a King Has Good Counsellors, His Reign is Peaceful*," as an advocacy tool. This video, disseminated through all sub-districts in RING partner MMDAs, aims to generate interest and call community leaders to action to support efforts to reduce stunting and malnutrition. Prior to the dissemination of the video in FY18 Q1, a one-day learning session was held to prepare facilitators and share lessons learned from video screenings held in FY17. The video was presented in local languages including Dagbani, Gonja and Likpakpaln, in seven districts during Q1. District facilitators utilized the video to sensitize community authorities – including religious and traditional leaders, assembly members, TBAs, women's group and youth group leaders, and others – on stunting, as well as optimal nutrition behaviors for the first 1,000 days of life to prevent stunting. Later, participants were invited to draw action plans to further disseminate key messages at the community level. Imams joined their counterpart pastors at several disseminations to draw action plans on how they would disseminate the messages at the community level and most of these religious leaders reported adding the key messages from the video to their respective sermons. As part of FY18 activities, proper follow will be continued by districts and Global Communities RING to monitor community leaders' implementation of action plans. In FY18 Q2, Global Communities RING will collaborate with the districts to screen the stunting advocacy video to VSLAs as part of efforts to integrate RING activities and to reach more beneficiaries.

Table 24 Stunting Advocacy Video Progress Summary by District

Districts	# of Facilitators Trained			# of Dissemination Meetings Held	# of Participants at Dissemination Meetings		
	Female	Male	Total	Total	Female	Male	Total
Chereponi	5	12	17	-	0	0	0
Gushegu	0	0	0	4	20	106	126
Karaga	0	0	0	2	11	41	52
Kumbungu	-	-	-	5	56	81	137
Nanumba North	0	0	0	5	22	102	124
Savelugu	0	0	0	6	60	103	166
Tolon	0	0	0	6	54	126	180
Total	5	12	17	28	223	559	782

Community Durbars

Durbars are community-level gatherings organized by the DHMT to sensitize community members on nutrition topics and break barriers preventing good nutrition practices. Global Communities RING provided technical support to districts to ensure that their planned durbars were themed to follow a set agenda, engaging participants actively to build awareness on malnutrition issues and promoting optimal behaviors for improved nutrition outcomes. Durbars are a key channel to reach men and community leaders, including chiefs, and to engage them in supporting nutrition practices in the community and at the household-level, especially



Photo 9 DDHS and Health Staff addressing community members during a durbar in Nanumba North District

for children in the first 1,000 days period. Durbars provide a platform for deeper discussion on the roles of men and women in relation to nutrition during this crucial period. It also affords the opportunity for HWs to better understand and correct misconceptions related to nutrition practices in the community, and to get feedback on services provided to community members. This activity reached over 46,000 people in 261 communities in 12 implementing districts.

Durbars are led by facility staff with support from DHMT and participation from District Agricultural Development Unit (DADU), and/or Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit (EHSU) representative, depending on the topic. The districts discussed topics including CMAM, exclusive breastfeeding (EBF), IFA tablet supplementation, maternal mortality, and health seeking behaviors as part of caring for a sick child. Durbar participants included community leadership, women, young men, and children. Community durbars are an effective tool to deliver multisectoral messages in one package and, as indicated in the FY17 report, the integration of components in carrying this activity will be enhanced during the 2018 calendar year implementation.

Table 25 Summary of Durbars by District

Districts	# of Events	# of Participants (by Sex)		
		Male	Female	Total
Central Gonja	0	0	0	0
Chereponi	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	20	1,582	2,103	3,685
East Mamprusi	0	0	0	0
Gushegu	0	0	0	0
Karaga	53	4,055	6,658	10,713
Kpandai	14	687	690	1,377
Kumbungu	38	1,794	4,093	5,887
Nanumba North	27	2,431	3,928	6,359
Nanumba South	17	1,930	2,452	4,382
North Gonja	24	2,057	2,369	4,426
Saboba	23	685	1,072	1,757
Sagnarigu	1	38	27	65
Savelugu-Nanton	19	828	1,231	2,059
Tamale	0	0	0	0
Tolon	15	1,249	1,750	2,999
West Gonja	10	1,092	1,320	2,412
Total	261	18,428	27,693	46,121

Mother to Mother Support Groups

Global Communities RING has found that VSLA is an effective platform to integrate complementary messaging and training in multiple disciplines. During the 2017 calendar year, the project used VSLA as a launch pad for OFSP activities, sensitizing women about the importance of improved household sanitation, and now, the integration of improved nutrition and childcare practices through the mother-to-mother support group approach found within the community-based portion of the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) program. In an effort to layer VSLAs' activities within MTMSG activities, RING supported MTMSG formation and training through existing VSLAs. MTMSGs are made up of women with children in the first 1,000 days of life who are also part of the VSLA. Women in MTMSGs meet to discuss nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive issues in addition to savings. This empowers them to use the income they generate to improve the nutrition and health of their children.

Monitoring reports from the districts pointed to continued enthusiasm among group members and adoption of positive nutrition behaviors. MTMSGs provide an opportunity for peer learning, sharing, and networking to resolve nutrition-related issues that the poorest households commonly face. RING's goal for FY18 is to train roughly 3,000 VSLAs formed under the project to MTMSG by training two members from each VSLA as facilitators to lead MTMSG discussions using IYCF counselling cards. MMDAs alone were unable to reach the target of promoting 1,000 VSLA groups to MTMSG during the fiscal year due to the intensity of trainings and other community outreach efforts. After training group leaders, program monitoring was lagging, and only 636⁴⁰ groups were able to form and initiate meetings during FY17. However, significant progress was made during the last quarter, resulting in 372 new groups formed and initiating meetings, bringing the total number of groups formed under the project to 1,008, or roughly 33% of the project target.

⁴⁰ FY17 reported indicated 564, but reports that came in later have increased the number to 636.

As part of strategy to scale up MTMSG, Global Communities RING and GHS engaged monitors during FY18 Q1 to intensify follow-up and supportive visits among various groups at the community level. These monitors successfully mapped out the groups in each of the 17 districts and have been conducting successful meetings and support for the groups. Follow-up



Photo 10 A DNO leads a session during an MTMSG training among VSLA members in Bincheratanga, Nanumba North District

visits indicate that most of the groups are meeting regularly and have successfully integrated support group discussions into the VSLA activities, which the women have found exciting. Some facilitators will need further support to improve their IYCF knowledge and facilitation skills. RING will also provide the groups with radio sets with preloaded nutrition messages in the local languages. During Q2, all groups formed will receive these radio sets to facilitate discussion.

Interactions with women in these groups indicate that most have a good understanding of key IYCF practices, have adopted these practices, and are sharing the messages with other women during social gatherings. RING will continue to monitor their activities and support respective district HWs to provide technical support to the groups and actively participate in their activities.

The figures in the table below represent tentative reports based on Q1 achievements. Global Communities RING has experienced some challenges in maintaining up to date records for this effort as it rapidly scales up. The rationale for this push is to ensure that all VSLAs are covered as soon as possible, allowing them at least one full year of technical support from sub-district health staff before they are weaned from the consistent presence of a GOG official. There have been additional challenges in incorporating records from the SPRING-initiated MTMSG into RING documentation as districts have not been adequately capturing those groups in their monitoring reports. By the close of the coming quarter, we expect to have a better understanding of the actual progress made, as well as have closed the gap between the current 1,008 groups and the targeted 3,000.

Table 26 MTMSG Progress to Date by District

District	# of Individuals Trained as Support Group Leaders (FY18 Q1)			# of RING VSLAs Promoted to MTMSGs	
	Female	Male	Total	FY18 Q1	LOP
Central Gonja	0	0	0	0	29
Chereponi	0	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	0	0	0	0	43
East Mamprusi	120	1	121	0	0
Gushegu	58	38	96	71	71
Karaga	0	0	0	0	52
Kpandai	0	0	0	0	79

Kumbungu	52	31	83	24	31
Nanumba North	73	16	89	34	100
Nanumba South	0	0	0	0	22
North Gonja	109	74	183	129	129
Saboba	0	0	0	0	52
Sagnarigu	0	0	0	0	76
Savelugu-Nanton	196	18	214	94	94
Tamale	0	0	0	0	16
Tolon	53	3	56	20	76
West Gonja	50	0	50	0	138
Total	711	181	892	372	1,008

Strengthening Monitoring, Supervision, and Coaching for Nutrition

Monitoring and supervision is the cornerstone of all RING activities. During FY18 Q1, Global Communities RING continued to work with DNOs to ensure that monitoring and supervision visits at the facility and community levels included post-training follow ups with training participants, integrated multiple nutrition topics in one visit (e.g. IYCF, CMAM, and anemia, rather than IYCF alone) occurred routinely, and facilities used available checklists/tools to document progress made and gaps identified. DNOs and other DHA and sub-district staff conducted monitoring, supportive supervision, and coaching visits with the DHA team visiting the sub-district, and with the sub-district team visiting the CHVs. Almost all the districts completed their planned Q1 monitoring, including the integrated monitoring and activity/program monitoring (ENA, MTMSG, etc.). All districts have reported an improvement in some of their indicators, such as early and regular ANC attendance, CWC session attendance, growth charts appropriately filled and plotted, counselling during CWC, active searches for CMAM cases occurring, and early referral for CMAM and ANC. Additionally, they have noted improvement in the content of activities due to regular follow up on activities and programs with support from Global Communities RING. Monitoring and supportive supervision and coaching visits were intensified in various districts during the quarter as the calendar year came to a close. During these visits, general findings indicated that, among other things, CMAM service delivery and hemoglobin testing rates had improved, while there were still persistent gaps in OPC card management and anemia case management, which will need to be addressed in later visits.

With regard to CMAM, visits with HWs revealed an increase in caseload and a marginal improvement in the cure rate with more HWs adhering to CMAM protocols. However, some challenges with the completion of OPC treatment cards and incorrect admission criteria still persist among some HWs. The RING team provided OJT and coaching on issues identified, for example, providing hands-on practice on the completion of the OPC treatment card. CHV visits revealed an increase in case detection and referral of cases compared to the previous quarters. These visits revealed an increase in the hemoglobin testing rate at the three recommended periods in pregnancy; however, HWs' adherence to anemia management protocol in pregnancy was found to be low. HWs are increasingly providing targeting counseling to pregnant women with anemia, a statistic confirmed by reviewing the IYCF register for pregnant women. CHVs are raising more awareness on anemia and its presentation, and are encouraging pregnant women to initiate ANC early and to regularly take IFA prescribed during ANC visits.

The majority of non-health staff who received ENA training and were visited during the period were observed to be actively disseminating key ENA messages as part of their routine work, with some carrying the ENA brochures and booklets in the field.

In this quarter, Nanumba North integrated CHV monitoring with CMAM case searches. Facility staff worked with CHVs to screen children within their catchment areas for SAM, resulting in a total of 1,400 children screened from 683 households. Through these screenings, 29 SAM cases were detected and referred to the respective facilities for registration into the CMAM outpatient care program. The table below presents a summary of monitoring, supervision, and coaching visits conducted by districts during the period under review.

To complement the efforts of DNOs and QI Facility Coaches in helping ensure functional QI teams, Global Communities RING provided supportive supervision to 21 health facilities across 6 districts, reaching a total of 79 health staff. These supportive supervisions engaged health staff on the frequency of QI meetings and coaching visits; their understanding of the QI approaches; indicators and change ideas worked on; and their technical gaps that needed redress. Supportive supervision visits also provided Global Communities RING an opportunity to participate in QI meetings and to meet QI teams' coaching and on-the-job training needs. Most QI teams were identified to be making modest and progressive improvement in the service gaps identified. Service gaps that were focused on most by the health facilities are: ANC and CWC coverage, family planning acceptance, and expanded program on immunization.

Table 27 Monitoring Summary by District and Topic

Districts	Monitoring/Supervision/Coaching Topic	# of HWs / CHVs / Non-Health Staff Visited (by Sex)		
		F	M	Total
East Gonja	CHVs on integrated nutrition services	29	108	137
	EHOs on ENAs	6	9	15
	TBAs on ENAs	42	0	42
	SHEP Teachers on ENAs	18	15	33
	MTMSGs	172	0	172
Kpandai	HWs on integrated nutrition services	13	28	41
	SHEP Teachers on ENAs	24	66	90
	HWs on integrated nutrition services	40	62	102
	AEAs on ENAs	1	2	3
	EHOs on ENAs	1	6	7
Nanumba North	MTMSGs	814	45	859
	CHVs on integrated nutrition services	9	115	124
	Cooking demonstration	532	363	895
	CHVs on integrated nutrition services	23	153	176
	MTMSGs	451	99	550
Nanumba South	SHEP Teachers on ENAs	3	14	17
	HWs on integrated nutrition services	15	13	28
	SHEP Teachers on ENAs	0	9	9
	MTMSGs	2	7	9
North Gonja	CHVs on integrated nutrition services	3	22	25
	DHA staff on integrated monitoring of HWs	9	7	16
West Gonja	HWs on integrated monitoring of CHVs	21	11	32
	CHV on IYCF	11	21	32
Saboba	DADU on ENA	2	13	15
	EHO on ENA	3	5	8
Central Gonja	HW on integrated nutrition check list	30	25	55
Total # of Staff Monitored during the Quarter		2,274	1,218	3,492



Photo 11 (L) Health Worker monitors TBA activities in ENA in East Gonja District; (R) Nanumba North CHV screens a child for SAM during a household visit

Regional Health Directorate Coordination

During the quarter, Global Communities RING continued its commitment to ensuring effective coordination and collaboration with GHS, USAID implementing partners, and development partners in the region. Global Communities RING routinely met with the NRHD Nutrition Unit to discuss RING's district-level activities and outcomes, and participate in meetings led by the NRHD to discuss regional initiatives. Global Communities RING also supported NRHD to realign funds to conduct activities planned, such as training outstanding priority health staff in CMAM and C-IYCF, in addition to updating the supportive supervision checklist for all nutrition topics and submitting it to NRHD for feedback. RING expects this round of feedback and revision to be followed by a pre-test of the tool. Finally, Global Communities RING coordinated heavily with the NRHD and several DHMTs to conduct recruitment for district-based monitors to support MTMSG at the community level and to engage with DNOs toward updates of their training trackers.

Component 2b – WASH

Increased adoption of positive sanitation and hygiene behaviors among target households

Throughout FY17, the Global Communities RING WASH Team continued providing targeted technical assistance to all partner districts on WASH activity planning, implementation and management. The technical support provision continued in the first quarter of FY18, as districts proceeded with implementation of the remaining planned activities for 2017. As a result of the technical support, district WASH teams have continually improved upon relevant skills and increased their general knowledge for and emphasis on quality implementation; this is evident by the results included in key activity summaries below. With the exception of a few newly-posted staff, most of the district technical teams are well-trained at this point in the project, and Global Communities RING's assistance strategy has now fully shifted from formalized trainings to supportive coaching to improve the quality of implementation. This often includes CLTS

monitoring, the frequency and length of the visits, and depth of discussion held with target households, community stakeholders, and Natural Leaders (NLs). Global Communities RING continued to provide guidance to District Facilitation Teams as they supported Natural Leaders in four districts that commenced the Natural Leaders Network strategy. Other areas Global Communities RING supported included: follow up visits to assess the quality of borehole and latrine repairs, as well as facilitating water quality testing alongside district staff, and supporting district distribution and user education for hand washing stations and household water filtration systems. Details on each activity undertaken during the period can be found below.

Community-Led Total Sanitation

Activity Summary *Community Led Total Sanitation*

Activity Objective: CLTS uses behavior change communication techniques to spark awareness in communities practicing open defecation and other unsanitary practices that contribute to the ingestion of human excreta and leading to illness. From this realization, the community can then be facilitated on a path to halting open defecation. The goal is for each household in the community to have its own latrine, hand washing station, and for the home and its surroundings to be as clean as possible. There is no external funding support provided from facilitating agencies – households must use their own materials, whether purchased or harvested locally, to construct simple latrines and their superstructures. Once every household has constructed its latrine and hand washing station and has cleaned its surroundings, the community is verified and can be declared Open Defecation Free.

Certification Process: Communities will undergo a series of check-ups before they can be declared ODF. The first is a community self-assessment, in which community stakeholders will conduct a full review of the community, observing for human excreta, indiscriminate refuse dumping, and ensuring that each household has its own latrine, hand washing station, and is kept clean and free of animal feces. Once the community is satisfied with how most households have achieved this, they request the District Interagency Coordination Committee for Sanitation (DICCS) to come and do their first assessment. If the district team grades the community as passing, the community is then ODF Basic and the Regional Interagency Coordination Committee for Sanitation (RICCS) is called in. Once the RICCS conducts its verification and certifies the community has met all criteria, they are declared Open Defecation Free and the community will host a small durbar to celebrate the achievement. *Follow-Up Support:* The District CLTS Facilitation Team leads the process, conducting the initial community entry and baseline data collection, then the Triggering exercise, upon which the community members are made to realize the potential consequences of open defecation. The community is then visited by a member of the Facilitation Team 1-2 times per week over the next several months. This officer conducts house-to-house checks to note the progress of the community. During these visits, they may provide technical guidance on basic latrine siting and construction, management of waste water through the construction of soak away pits, encourage households to prioritize the installation of sanitation facilities such as tippy taps, facilitate community clean-up efforts, or support the community to undertake a self-assessment. Depending on the response of the community, follow-up visits may continue for six months to a year, while their progress toward ODF is evaluated by the District Facilitation Team. During this period, if the community is not close to achieving ODF status, the Team may opt to focus their intensive monitoring efforts on other villages that are more responsive. After some time (upwards of one year), the community may be revisited to see if their attitude toward accepting CLTS principles have changed.

Per their 2017 AWP, ten of the seventeen districts planned to trigger and support 220 new communities with CLTS. Given the comparably lower results with respect to open defecation free (ODF) achievement by the remaining seven districts⁴¹ over the past three years, Global Communities RING advised these districts not to trigger new communities during the year and instead focus on improving the quality of their engagement with households on technical aspects of latrine, soak away pit and tippy tap construction, and to conduct more frequent intensive monitoring visits to improve ODF conversion rates in the triggered communities. National guidelines on CLTS implementation and international best practices show that communities should be monitored at least 34 times in a year, including 28 intensive visits during the first six months of triggering, and a further 6 times after that community has achieved ODF status. Global Communities RING's observations from the last three years of implementation support these findings, as the districts with strong CLTS results adhered to the principles of carrying out consistent, high-quality monitoring, while the majority of lower-performing districts have displayed comparatively infrequent monitoring habits, despite encouragement to improve.

Through district facilitation teams (DFT) and CLTS Monitors, 27 communities were triggered in FY18 Q1. Four of the communities were actually triggered by SPRING, but inherited and monitored toward ODF status by RING. The total number of communities triggered by the project to date is 587 (583 by RING and 4 by SPRING). This quarter, 80 more RING communities were verified, declared and certified ODF. This brings the number of ODF communities under the RING project to 301, representing 51.3% of the 587 communities triggered to date. The 301 ODF communities also represents 76.6% of the RING LOP target for ODF achievement (n=393). This clearly signifies that, with sustained efforts and commitment by

⁴¹ Chereponi, Nanumba South, Tamale, Kumbungu, Savelugu, West Gonja and Central Gonja

District Assembly staff, Natural Leaders, Global Communities RING WASH team, and, above all, community members, RING will surpass the LOP target by the close of 2018.

Table 28: Summary of CLTS triggering progress

District	# of New CLTS Communities Targeted (2017)	# of CLTS Communities Triggered					# of ODF Communities (FY18 Q1)	# of ODF Communities (to date)
		District (FY18 Q1)	CLTS Monitors (FY18 Q1)	Total (FY18 Q1)	Total (2017)	Total (to date)		
Central Gonja	0	0	0	0	0	25	13	19
Chereponi	20	0	2	2	38	81	2	37
East Gonja	2	6	0	6	2	12	6	8
East Mamprusi	54	0	0	0	89	98	10	58
Gushegu	40	1	0	1	48	67	29	52
Karaga	30	0	0	0	31	46	0	32
Kpandai	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	7
Kumbungu	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	7
Nanumba North	27	1	0	1	27	42	4	26
Nanumba South	0	0	0	0	0	20	2	6
North Gonja	10	0	10	10	20	28	2	2
Saboba	25	3	0	3	40	56	4	16
Sagnarigu	5	0	0	0	0	15	0	2
Savelugu-Nanton	0	0	0	0	1	13	0	9
Tamale	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Tolon	7	4 ⁴²	0	4	9	22	8	15
West Gonja	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	5
Total	220	15	12	27	315	587	80	301

Activity Spotlight
FY18 CLTS Strategy

In FY18, Global Communities RING intends to strategically provide technical support six few districts (Chereponi, East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga, Nanumba North and Saboba) where MMDAs have demonstrated a high level of commitment and significant achievements have already been made. Global Communities RING believes that, with more strategically delivered support, Chereponi, East Mamprusi, Karaga, and Nanumba North can become ODF districts in 2018. Chereponi, for instance, has a total of 181 communities in the district; of these, 150 have been triggered, leaving 31 remaining. Of those triggered communities, 72 have been declared ODF (~40%) and 78 at various stages of implementation. For the district to become ODF, there is still a herculean task of converting the remaining 78 triggered communities and the 31 communities left unattended to. To support Chereponi achieve this feat, Global Communities assisted the district to analyze the remaining OD communities (triggered and non) against their DFT's strengths and weaknesses; the EHSD concluded that the remaining 31 un-triggered communities would be assigned to District Environmental Health Staff and CLTS Monitors (10 for EHSD and 25 for CLTS Monitors) while the triggered 78 communities would be shared among the Natural Leaders and District Assembly staff, supported by RING and UNICEF. Global Communities RING is using a similar approach for the other top performance districts in 2018.

When examining results thus far against the project's LOP target, Global Communities RING is on pace to surpass the 393 ODF community goal (one-third of RING partner communities) with approximately one year of implementation remaining. However performance by district is varied, and several MMDAs have registered the bulk of the achievement. In recognition of this momentum, Global Communities RING set out to identify the top performing districts as potential sites for additional support in their efforts to achieve district-wide ODF status by the close of 2018. These districts were selected by the WASH technical team after careful analysis of district-specific situations, including commitment, enthusiasm, and overall technical competence of implementing officers, and a comparison of the results achieved to date against the remaining number of OD communities. Using these indicators as a barometer, six districts have been identified, with four at a high-potential for district-wide ODF category – Chereponi, East Mamprusi, Karaga and Nanumba North – with Gushegu and Saboba coming in at a close second.

The six MMDAs combined have 1,402 communities, of which 908 (65%) have been triggered through RING, the MMDA, or another development partner. Of those, 484, or 53%, are currently

⁴² Triggered by SPRING and handed over to the districts, but not captured in previous reports.

ODF. With only 494 communities yet to be triggered and the active presence of multiple WASH partners in the districts, Global Communities RING believes this cadre of Assemblies stand the best chance at achieving the district-wide ODF feat. To support in the accomplishment of this enormous task, Global Communities RING has committed to placing CLTS Monitors in the 6 districts, and to fully supporting the Assemblies to scale up the Natural Leaders Network effort. With all channels moving and momentum from near-weekly ODF achievements continuing to mount, 2018 promises to be the best year for CLTS under RING.

Figure 2 Summary of CLTS Performance in Top Six Performing RING Districts

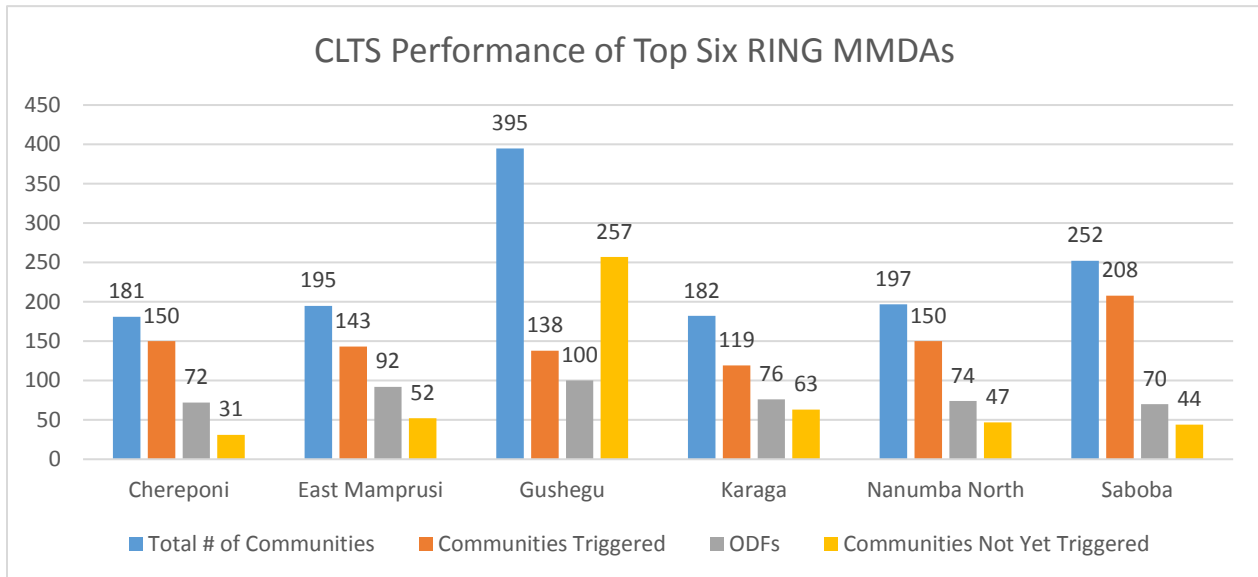


Photo 12 CLTS Monitors simulating community entry during the training

As part of the strategy, Global Communities RING has recruited 11 more short term staff as CLTS Monitors and Natural Leaders Network (NLN) Facilitators (4 women and 7 men) to support CLTS implementation in the 6 top-performing districts. Each recruit has been comprehensively trained on CLTS implementation and support. The training program lasted five days with three days of presentations, theoretical discussions of concepts and simulations, and two days of field applications. The content was carefully chosen to include topics that will deepen participants' understanding of

CLTS in relation to their specific roles and position within their communities. The training was packed and key among the topics discussed were: definitions, principles, processes, and tools of CLTS; the RING CLTS strategies and results; concept of WASH-1000 and the WASH-Nutrition nexus; community entry and mobilization in CLTS implementation; facilitation and communication skills; coordination among CLTS stakeholders; ODF verification protocol; data transmission and reporting results; rapport and relationship building with MMDA staff; and

introduction to the WASH for Health (W4H) communication package. The current monitors were also invited, particularly to share their experiences, challenges, and strategies with the new recruits. This interaction was useful in providing suggested solutions to anticipated challenges and preparing the minds of the recruits about existing environmental, cultural, and social relationships that are at play in the communities and districts and may impact their work.



Photo 13 (L) Latrine construction in progress and (R) community triggering in Nafarun, Tolon District

As part of the training, participants, together with Tolon District Assembly staff, triggered and conducted post-triggering activities in two communities (Tolon-Nafarun and Nyankpala-Nafarun). Both communities have fully absorbed the concept and have begun actions to stop open defecation. Since the triggering in early December, 22 latrine pit excavations have been completed in Tolon-Nafarun and Nyankpala-Nafarun and are currently awaiting technical guidance for local slab construction.

Through the implementation of CLTS, households constructed 1,223 new latrines and 1,415 tippy taps in FY18 Q1. Even if the communities are not yet ODF certified, these measures grant access to safe sanitation and improved hygiene to about 9,539 community members. From project start to date, 12,013 latrines and 8,124 hand washing stations (tippy taps) have been constructed subsidy-free through implementation of RING-supported CLTS. Most of the facilities are constructed with materials available in the communities, which can be retrieved without the households incurring any financial costs. This approach is in line with the core principles and values of CLTS implementation, which frowns on full or partial subsidy for sanitation and hygiene hardware, but instills self-confidence and self-reliance in community members. This has resulted in situations where landlords have built latrines to replace collapsed or filled ones without complaining about cost. Through the construction of these facilities, an estimated 93,700 people now have access to improved sanitation in RING operational communities. Residents of ODF communities have expressed great self-esteem at their achievements. During a recent ODF celebration at Kpinjinga (Sagnarigu District), community members expressed immense satisfaction about their new status and remarked about their commitment to maintaining their ODF status forever. Suweba Mohammed, a Natural Leader in the community said, *“We have worked so hard to achieve this feat and we will make sure we maintain the status. Fly population has reduced considerably and there is no longer pungent smell of feces in this community. You can sit anywhere and eat food. Is this not beautiful?”* And during the USAID|Ghana Mission Director’s October field visit to Vehikuga (an ODF community in Kumbungu), Natural Leaders enumerated benefits of constructing and using sanitation and hygiene facilities as well as becoming an ODF community. Zariatu Wumbei said, *“Before we constructed latrines, we used to defecate in the nearby bushes and behind our homes; our*

children used to fall sick. Now that we are using latrines and our community is ODF, our children don't fall sick often and we hardly visit the clinic."

In early 2017, Global Communities RING realized that triggered households were prioritizing latrine construction over that of tippy taps. Given that a tippy tap can easily be installed in one day with minimal materials, and that handwashing with soap has an immediate impact of reducing diarrheal disease transmission by 23% (WHO, 2014)⁴³, the WASH Team intensified engagement and provided technical support on improved behavior change communication (BCC) to districts to bridge the gap. This technical engagement and advocacy continued in FY18 Q1 and has yielded positive results. Currently, more than 91% of latrines in RING communities have tippy taps nearby to aid hand washing with soap. Global Communities RING intends to continue to promote BCC messaging on prioritization of hand washing until parity is achieved in the construction of latrines and installation of tippy taps.



Photo 14 Zariatu Wumbei extolling the benefits of CLTS during a community durbar at Vehikuga

Table 29 Summary of Household Latrine and Tippy Tap construction progress, by district

Districts	Household Latrines		Tippy Taps	
	Constructed (FY18 Q1)	Constructed (to date)	Constructed (FY18 Q1)	Constructed (to date)
Central Gonja	0	273	0	214
Chereponi	88	1,507	56	1,088
East Gonja	283	631	298	680
East Mamprusi	43	1,816	93	1,668
Gushegu	227	1,178	88	886
Karaga	2	589	4	566
Kpandai	0	251	0	196
Kumbungu	0	218	0	182
Nanumba North	37	955	75	1,029
Nanumba South	0	414	0	288
North Gonja	29	300	94	368
Saboba	258	972	226	673
Sagnarigu	0	41	0	57
Savelugu	0	210	0	201
Tamale	0	18	0	1
Tolon	237	1,051	224	918
West Gonja	53	183	291	669
Total	1,257	10,607	1,449	9,684

⁴³ WHO (2014) Preventing Diarrhea through better water, sanitation and hygiene: Exposures and impacts in low and middle income countries. Geneva, Switzerland; WHO.

Borehole Repairs

Activity Summary Borehole Repairs

Activity Objective: Providing potable water access is a significant step in preventing the transmission of diarrheal diseases that often result in malnutrition-related illnesses. This activity ensures that existing boreholes are functional and that regular maintenance is systematized at the community-level, preventing most minor breakdowns. Borehole repairs is also coupled with water and sanitation management team training, as well as training and outfitting of pump caretakers and, if necessary, Area Mechanics.

Input Support: Each of the targeted pumps must undergo an assessment to determine the extent of the damage and the parts needed for repair. Once assessed by the district, parts are procured and the pump is fixed, either by the District Works Engineer or the trained Area Mechanic.

Follow-Up Support: WSMTs are re-constituted and trained during the repair process; their activities include, among other things, collecting and managing user fees for the borehole. This money is then used to support general maintenance and repair minor breakdowns to ensure longevity of the repaired pump.

Global Communities RING Support: To ensure quality and correctness of assessments, Global Communities RING reviews assessment reports and undertakes spot checks of the assessed pumps.

In 2017, fifteen districts targeted 146 boreholes for repairs. By the close of FY17, 151⁴⁴ boreholes had been repaired in those districts, with repairs for 24 units outstanding in Gushegu, Chereponi, North Gonja, and West Gonja. Within this quarter, Gushegu, North Gonja, and West Gonja Districts⁴⁵ repaired a total 29 boreholes, bringing the total number of boreholes repaired under the 2017 AWP to 180, or 123% of the annual target. From inception to date, RING has successfully repaired 549 boreholes, providing access to safe drinking water to about 165,000 in RING operational communities. This intervention has brought relief to numerous children and women in beneficiary communities, both of whom often trek long distances on a daily basis to collect water – mostly from unsafe sources – for domestic use. In the dry season (typically Q1 and Q2 of a fiscal year), when most of the surface water collection points dry up, children often miss school to support their mothers scavenging for water, a process that sometimes takes the entire day, yielding only 50-60 liters to be used by the large households. This pressure on water access often limits a household's hygienic behaviors, such as handwashing, making year-round potable water access all the more critical.

As indicated earlier, East Mamprusi, Nanumba North, Kpandai, and Tolon repaired significantly higher number of boreholes than planned in 2017. This is due in part to prudent financial management, but also because districts have consistently not been able to complete assessments prior to annual work plan and budget preparation (which typically takes place 4-5 months before repairs would begin) and therefore usually have higher amounts budgeted than what is required to repair their initial target. Through several years' worth of experience, districts now have a more accurate idea of the standard needs and average costs of repairing pumps.

Interaction with some Water and Sanitation Management Team (WSMT) members and District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWST) have indicated there has been great improvement in school attendance in some of the borehole repair communities, particularly among young girls who are often burdened by water fetching duties. Shahadu Bashiru of East Gonja District Assembly (DWST team leader) said, *"School attendance for girl children in the communities that benefited from the borehole repairs in the [communities across the lake] have improved remarkably. Some of the schools used to have only boys coming to school, but after the borehole repairs the girls have returned to school."* Amadu Achulo of Alhaji Kali Community in the same district explained that, *"Now our children and women have been saved by this philanthropic gesture. They spend less time collecting water for household use"*.

⁴⁴ East Mamprusi, Nanumba North, Kpandai and Tolon) repaired significantly higher number of boreholes than planned

⁴⁵ Chereponi plans to repair their pumps in the coming quarter via the 2017 subcontract extension.

Table 30: Summary of borehole repairs during the quarter, by district

District	# of Boreholes Targeted for Repairs (2017)	# of Boreholes Repaired (FY18 Q1)	# of Boreholes Repaired (2017)	% of 2017 Target Achieved	# of Boreholes Repaired (LOP)
Central Gonja	5	0	6	120	42
Chereponi	5	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	10	1	11	110	24
East Mamprusi	10	0	19	53	67
Gushegu	8	8	8	100	15
Karaga	20	0	20	100	40
Kpandai	10	0	17	59	40
Kumbungu	0	0	0	0	14
Nanumba North	10	0	13	143	49
Nanumba South	5	10	24 ⁴⁶	480	58
North Gonja	8	6	8	100	32
Saboba	20	0	19	105	55
Sagnarigu	15	0	12	80	12
Savelugu	5	0	5	100	27
Tamale	0	0	0	0	16
Tolon	10	0	14	140	34
West Gonja	5	4	4	80	24
Total	146	29	180	123	549

Water and Sanitation Management Team Trainings

Activity Summary <i>Water & Sanitation Management Team Training</i>
<p><i>Activity Objective:</i> To improve community-level management and upkeep of water facilities, each community has its own Water & Sanitation Management Team (WSMT). This team is made up of community volunteers who are charged with the responsibility of operating and maintaining water facilities. Their responsibilities include setting up a tariff system for the water taken from the borehole; mobilization and management of funds for borehole repairs. General topics included in the training are: composition and functions of WSMT, group dynamics and conflict management, operations of WSMT and maintenance of water facilities, funds mobilization and financial management, record keeping and accountability, networking with Area Mechanics and spare parts dealers and negotiations for parts, water safety management, and water site and environmental management.</p> <p><i>Follow-Up Support:</i> In addition to training and provision of basic tool kits, the District Assembly will provide quarterly monitoring to the WSMT to note their progress in leading sanitation efforts, managing funds, and maintaining the upkeep of the boreholes.</p>

To guarantee effective and efficient operation and maintenance of water facilities, fifteen districts planned borehole repairs in 2017 and targeted 168 Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMT) for reconstitution and training. During FY18 Q1, 15 WSMTs (70 men and 58 women) were trained by five MMDAs, bringing the total number of WSMTs under the project up to 311 in 17 implementing districts, comprising more than 2,100 individuals. To ensure that WSMT trainings met the national guidelines, Global Communities RING reviewed the training content for each three-day event, focusing on delivery approaches covering the following subject areas: roles and responsibilities of WSMTs in operation and maintenance of water facilities, record keeping and accountability, fund raising and sound financial management, and maintenance of the facilities. Due to these reviews and close supervision and technical support, the quality of trainings have improved over the previous years, where districts trained WSMTs and pump caretakers using an inconsistent curriculum. Global Communities RING also collaborated with districts to ensure water hygiene, safety and environmental integrity was included in the course, bringing trainings in line with the RING water safety plan and USAID sector guidelines on water supply and sanitation delivery.

⁴⁶ Fourteen of the boreholes are 2016 boreholes that were repaired and reported in 2017

Table 31 Summary of WSMT trainings, by district

District	# of WSMTs Targeted (2017)	# of WSMTs Trained (FY18 Q1)	# of Individuals Trained in FY18 Q1			# of WSMTs Trained (LOP)
			Men	Women	Total	
Central Gonja	6	2	13	8	21	31
Chereponi ⁴⁷	5	0	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	10	0	0	0	0	26
East Mamprusi	10	0	0	0	0	37
Gushiegu	8	8	34	22	56	16
Karaga	20	0	0	0	0	39
Kpandai	10	0	0	0	0	23
Nanumba North	10	0	0	0	0	5
Nanumba South	6	0	0	0	0	33
North Gonja	8	5	23	28	51	10
Saboba	20	0	0	0	0	12
Sagnarigu	15	0	0	0	0	6
Savelugu	5	0	0	0	0	16
Tamale	0	0	0	0	0	10
Tolon	10	0	0	0	0	12
West Gonja	25	0	0	0	0	35
Total	168	15	70	58	128	311

All the trained WSMTs within the quarter have started operating bank accounts, mobilizing resources for operation and maintenance, as well as keeping records of their transactions, which is in line with sector guidelines for functional WSMTs. While waiting to receive updated information on WSMT performance from the district, 2017 overall data shows that 98 WSMTs trained in 6 districts within the last three years have mobilized GHS 44,599 (US\$10,136 at a 4.4 exchange rate) for operations and maintenance, expended GHS9,485 (US\$2,156) on minor maintenance of their water facilities, and maintain GHS35,114 (US\$7,980) in their accounts. Average income of the WSMTs range from GHS392 (US\$89) in Kpandai to GHS116 (US\$26) in East Mamprusi, while average annual expenditure per WSMT ranged from GHS148 (US\$34) in East Gonja to GHS5 (US\$1.13) in Savelugu. In all cases, incomes exceeded expenditures of the WSMTs, showing that, as they mobilize money from sale of water and other sources and expend on their facility maintenance, they still have enough reserves for future operation and maintenance. This is a strong indication of functionality of WSMTs, prudent financial management, and sustainability of water service delivery.

Alongside the general WSMT training, the same districts trained 28 hand pump caretakers (23 men and 5 women) on preventive maintenance (greasing, pump head servicing, and tightening of bolts), bringing the number of pump caretakers trained by the RING project to 441 (303 men and 138 women). The two-day training covered the following subject areas: pump headset components, tools required for dismantling and assembly, dismantling and assembly of the pump set, greasing, tightening of bolts and nuts, and pump site cleaning and environmental management. After the training, all participants could dismantle and reassemble pump heads of all approved hand pumps installed in their respective districts⁴⁸. This low-cost sub-activity saves the WSMTs and communities from unnecessary expenditure on hand pump operations and maintenance. This ensures repairs needed on the hand pump are minimal and can be addressed by the pump caretaker, reducing the need for WSMTs to bring in an external agent who will attract a fee for their services. Fati Mastawudu of Donkompe community in North Gonja District explained, “*We now have someone from this community who is able to do basic*

⁴⁷ Chereponi only included borehole repairs in their 2017 AWP and therefore, their progress toward WSMT training is quite low.

⁴⁸ Ghana modified Indian Mark II, AfriDev and Nira.

maintenance on our hand pump and we hardly bring people from outside to work on [it]. The person was trained by the District Assembly and he works with us for free.”

Area Mechanic Trainings

Activity Summary
Water & Sanitation Management Team and Area Mechanic Training

Activity Objective: To support community-level maintenance efforts, each WSMT has a trained Pump Care Taker, who is given a basic tool kit and undertakes regular servicing of the borehole. For repairs that may be more complicated than the basic and routine challenges, the district also trains a team of local engineers called Area Mechanics. These community members are typically responsible for a larger catchment area; the WSMTs can reach out to the Area Mechanics for more in-depth challenges and draws funds from the community borehole account to cover parts and labor costs.

In line with the national guidelines for effective operation and maintenance of water facilities, seven districts initially planned training for 59 Area Mechanics to support repairs of water facilities in their catchment areas, per their 2017 AWP. Area Mechanics are private sector individuals who undertake borehole repairs through district contracts, or are hired directly by communities as needed. During FY18 Q1, 14 Area Mechanics were trained by Nanumba North and Gushegu Districts, bringing the number trained per the 2017 AWP to 52 (88% of target), and 113 over the LOP. North Gonja is yet to train their Area Mechanics and will do so in the coming quarter under an extension to their 2017 subcontract. Given the fact that some districts previously trained area mechanics who could not function properly or failed to provide the needed repair assistance to communities, Global Communities RING throughout 2017 and this quarter insisted on the use of nationally-approved guidelines and procedures for selecting participants and recruiting facilitators. Prior to the trainings, Global Communities RING WASH Officers also reviewed training content and delivery approaches to certify their appropriateness. In some cases Global Communities RING WASH team participated in the trainings to ensure quality delivery. Each of the trained Area Mechanics received appropriate toolkit to facilitate their work.



Photo 15 Training of Area Mechanics at Donkompe

The Area Mechanics trained in 2017 and this quarter have so far shown great skill and professionalism in dealing with WSMTs and community members; field monitoring has not yet revealed a case of extortion or theft of borehole parts by the Area Mechanics, as some communities experienced in the past. Global Communities RING and District Water and Sanitation Teams have standardized fees of Area Mechanics using Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) guidelines for operation and maintenance of rural water facilities. Area Mechanics charge a maximum of GHS100 (US\$23) per borehole repaired, which is significantly lower than what external contractors would charge for the same services, but commensurate to what a local artisan would charge for their time and effort. These RING trained Area Mechanics are profiled by DWSTs and their work is properly monitored, coordinated, and regulated, a drastic improvement on the ad hoc management of local contractors that has been observed in the past. Districts have also strategically pulled Area Mechanics from sub-districts, ensuring each Area Council has at least one specialist. This

ensures communities are able to easily reach them for service contracts and have issues resolved in real time; Area Mechanics also have reduced travel working within a smaller vicinity.

Most District WASH Engineers and DWST leaders have indicated that, since WSMTs are now able to mobilize adequate amounts of funds and Area Mechanics are readily available for repairs, it takes less than the nationally-accepted three days to repair a broken pump. Before engagement under RING, it often took months for these repairs to take place, causing community members to resort to their old ways of drinking any available surface water. Ezekiel Asiedu Obeng, the North Gonja DWST Team Leader, elaborated that, *“When we were planning our Area Mechanic training, Global Communities RING insisted on us hiring CWSA certified trainer for the training. We thought they were intruding, but today we have seen the difference. The newly-trained Area Mechanics are more professional and will not do anything untoward in the community. Now we have less complaints about shoddy workmanship and exorbitant charges by Area Mechanics. We are very satisfied with the technical advice provided by Global Communities RING”*.

Table 32: Summary of Area Mechanics trainings by district

District	# of Area Mechanics targeted (2017)	Area Mechanic Training Results		
		Trained (FY18 Q1)	Total # of 2017 Area Mechanics trained)	Total (LOP)
East Gonja	6	0	6	6
East Mamprusi	5	0	5	15
Gushegu	8	8	8	16
Karaga	20	0	20	29
Kpandai	6	0	7	7
Nanumba North	6	6	6	12
North Gonja	8	0	0	7
Saboba	0	0	0	9
Sagnarigu	0	0	0	6
Savelugu	0	0	0	0
Tamale	0	0	0	0
Tolon	0	0	0	0
West Gonja	0	0	0	6
Total	59	14	52	113

Water Quality Analysis

Water-related diseases are responsible for one-sixth of all outpatient department cases of health facilities and a third of mortalities globally and about 2.4 million lives are lost annually from the same cause, with the vast majority occurring in developing nations (South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa) (WHO, 2005). It is estimated that 20% of the global population lacks access to safe drinking water and an additional one-sixth can only access the same at a distance of one kilometer or more (WHO, 2005)⁴⁹. The high death toll and negative health and economic effects presents a gloomy picture, challenging world bodies and water service providers to ensure that water provided to people is safe for human consumption. In spite of the increased implementation of water supply projects geared towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2025, most safe water facilities still deliver questionable quality water. To ensure that water facilities deliver acceptable level of water services, the WHO set benchmarks based on quantity, quality,

⁴⁹ World Health Organization (2005) Water Safety Plans: Managing drinking-water quality from catchment to consumer. World Health Organization.

coverage, cost, and continuity to guide country water service delivery (1997; 2011)⁵⁰. Based on these challenges, minimum standards for service delivery by water facilities in Ghana is 20 liters per person per day, within a 500-meter radius of the community as per the Ghana Standards Authority (CWSA, 2010)⁵¹. To ensure that water quality does not deteriorate, CWSA recommends that quality monitoring should be conducted twice a year by certified laboratories.

To satisfy these water safety requirements and guarantee users quality water services, Global Communities RING planned to support all 17 MMDAs to analyze water samples from all repaired boreholes and installed rainwater harvesting facilities in FY17. During the year, Global Communities RING engaged the services of Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) to test water samples from all installed rainwater harvesting facilities and boreholes repaired in 2017, using WHO and GSA guidelines. By the close of 2017, 136 of the 202 samples had been tested. In FY18 Q1, an additional 29 samples were tested, bringing the total number of water samples tested to 165 (82% of the target). The remaining 18% are rain water harvesting facilities that are currently without water and will be tested by FY18 Q3, after the first several rainfalls.

In 2017, water testing was not included in the MMDA RING AWP and Global Communities RING bore the costs, while the district officers were responsible for collecting the samples and submitting them to GWCL for testing. During 2018 implementation, however, these costs have been factored into the district work plans and budgets, ensuring that districts themselves play a more central role in the management of the water quality testing process.

Bacteriological Test Results for microbial water quality, verification included microbiological testing, which involved analysis of fecal indicator microorganisms and assessment of specific pathogen densities. Verification of the microbial quality of drinking-water included testing for total coliforms (including *Escherichia coli* [*E. coli*]) and streptococci, which provides conclusive evidence of fecal pollution, either from human or animal sources (WHO, 2005). Test results of the 29 samples showed varying loads of total and fecal coliforms. While 10 samples tested positive for total coliforms, 1 sample was positive for fecal coliforms and 1 positive for streptococci. The results suggest fecal contamination of those water sources.

Global Communities RING has since alerted the affected Assemblies about the quality issues, asking them to temporarily lock the hand pumps until solutions are provided. In the interim, Global Communities RING has concluded discussions with GWCL about alternative solutions and their social and economic cost. Local experience of GWCL with regards to water treatment coupled with international best practices has shown that, disinfection of the affected facilities with calcium hypo-chloride and flushing is the best method of dealing with biological agents in the water. The cost of disinfecting and flushing one water facility (borehole or rainwater harvesting system) is GHS700 (US\$159) for labor and materials. Remedial action on the affected water facilities will soon commence. Moving forward, water sampling and testing activities will be led by MMDAs with technical support from Global Communities RING and EHSD. In pursuit of the transfer of this obligation to MMDAs, Global Communities RING supported incorporation of water quality testing in their 2018 Annual Work Plans and budgets. In

⁵⁰ World Health Organization (1997) Guidelines for drinking-water quality: surveillance and control of community supply. 2nd edition (vol. 3) Geneva: World Health Organization. World Health Organization (2011) Guidelines for drinking-water quality. 4th edition. Geneva: World Health Organization.

⁵¹ Community Water and Sanitation Agency (2010) Small communities sector guidelines: Operation and maintenance guidelines. www.ircwash.org [Accessed September 14, 2016]

2018 MMDAs will also be encouraged to select the affected communities for CLTS implementation, in order to prevent indiscriminate defecation and groundwater contamination.

Table 33 Test results for bacteriological parameters

District	# of samples tested	Samples that did not meet benchmark for parameters		
		Total Coliforms	Fecal Coliforms	Fecal Streptococci
East Mamprusi	2	0	0	0
Nanumba North	10	10	1	1
East Gonja	3	0	0	0
North Gonja	7	0	0	0
Gushegu	7	0	0	0
Total	29	10	1	1

Physio-Chemical Quality Assessments of drinking-water relies on comparison of the results of water quality analysis with guideline values. A guideline value represents the concentration of a constituent that does not exceed tolerable risk to the health of the consumer over a lifetime of consumption. Chemicals that pose high risk and are of health concern in the Northern Region are high concentrations of iron, fluorides, and manganese in few locations (Siabi, 2013)⁵². In addition to chemical substances, a set of physical characteristics of water, including very high or low pH values (alkalinity), smell, turbidity, and change in color are useful indicators of change in quality and are often cited by consumers as reasons for rejecting water from a specific supply source. The test results for physical factors have shown that, just a few of the water samples tested positive for iron, chromium, sodium and chlorine. A few others recorded low PH levels and high turbidity. In essence, physical and chemical parameters were not serious issues for the 29 water samples tested within the quarter.

Table 34 Test results for physical parameters

District	# of samples tested	Samples that did not meet benchmark for the parameters					
		Conductivity	Total Dissolved solids	Hardness	Turbidity	Color	PH
East Mamprusi	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Nanumba North	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Gonja	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
North Gonja	7	0	0	0	1	0	6
Gushegu	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	29	0	0	0	3	0	8

Table 35 Test results for chemical parameters

District	# of water samples tested	Samples that did not meet benchmark for the parameters										
		Sodium	Nitrite	Nitrate	Manganese	Iron	Chlorine	Fluoride	Chromium	Arsenic	Ammonia	Aluminum
East Mamprusi	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nanumba North	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

⁵² Siabi, W. K. (2013) 'Building effective strategy for rural water safety planning' Joint workshop on household water treatment and safe storage and water safety plans. UNICEF/WHO/UCU/NEERI, Accra Ghana. (Nov. 14-16, 2013).

District	# of water samples tested	Samples that did not meet benchmark for the parameters										
		Sodium	Nitrite	Nitrate	Manganese	Iron	Chlorine	Fluoride	Chromium	Arsenic	Ammonia	Aluminum
East Gonja	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
North Gonja	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Gushegu	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	29	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	0	0	0

Household Water Treatment

Activity Summary
Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage

Activity Objective: Some communities are without access to borehole, pipe or otherwise potable water, and rely solely on surface water for drinking. To support access to potable water in these locations, districts may purchase locally-constructed clay water filters and water filtration tablets (Aquatabs) to purify the surface water before consumption.

Input Support: Each household receives at least one filter and two cartons of Aquatabs and are provided user maintenance training, as well as sensitization on the importance of drinking potable water, with an emphasis on safe storage and ensuring young children and sick family members drink only clean water.

Follow-Up Support: The district provides quarterly follow-up visits to the communities that received the filters and collects data on water usage and any challenges with breakages or needs for replacement.

Most RING partner districts are located in water stressed areas and have challenges accessing groundwater via borehole drilling and mechanization, causing households to depend heavily on surface sources for drinking water. As a result, there is an absolute need for point of use treatment to reduce the spread of water-borne illnesses. RING currently promotes household treatment using ceramic filters and aqua tabs.



Photo 16 EHSD staff distributing water filters at Kagbal in the North Gonja District

In 2017, nine districts planned the distribution of 1,855 ceramic filters and 3,060 boxes of aqua tabs to 1,855 households for household water treatment. By the close of FY17, 1,230 ceramic filters were distributed to individual households, representing 66.3% of the 2017 target. In FY18 Q1 an additional 602 filters were distributed to 602 households in Gushegu, Kpandai and North Gonja, bringing the total to 1,832 (98% of the 2017 target). The total number of water filters

distributed by the RING project to date is 3,559. To complement efficacy of the filter treatment procedure, the same nine districts planned the distribution of 3,060 boxes of aqua tabs to the same households, and by the close of the fiscal year, they had distributed 1,415 boxes of aqua tabs, representing 46.2% of the 2017 target. In FY18 Q1, districts distributed an additional 1,308 boxes to 602 households, bringing the total number boxes distributed to 2,713 (89% of 2017 target). The total number of aqua tab boxes distributed to date is 5,782. Chereponi is the only district that has not yet distributed their water filters and aqua tabs as planned in their 2017

AWP. It is estimated that the procurement and distribution will be done between now and February 2018 within their 2017 subcontract extension.

As cited above, the percentage achievement of this intervention was quite disturbing in previous quarters. However, due to strengthened internal communication and collaboration between Global Communities RING WASH and Governance Teams, the existing bottlenecks were resolved, leading to improved implementation in FY18 Q1. Learning from the districts that implemented in previous quarters, the three districts that implemented the filtration intervention in FY18 Q1 merged the contracts of supplying and distributing to beneficiary communities. This was to ensure that broken filter pots (a common challenge for poorly- and over-packed delivery trucks that companies often use) were replaced by the suppliers. With this mitigation measure in place, none of the three districts recorded breakages.

An additional benefit of this arrangement was that District Environmental Health Departments collaborated with the product suppliers to conduct on-site sensitization and demonstrations on care and maintenance⁵³. The recipients took turns demonstrating appropriate use of the products for water treatment. Monitoring results from Goa Fishing Camp and Kagbal in North Gonja, and Taha and Bukpomo in Sagnarigu by Global Communities RING staff have revealed proper use of the units. Amadu Sherifa of Goa indicated that the intervention is very useful to them and had this to say: *During the dry season our water sources dry up and the remaining water becomes very muddy, sometimes as thick as porridge, and without filtering it becomes difficult to use for cooking. We thank God that the project has come to our aid. We can now filter our water before use.*

Even though beneficiaries are touting the benefits of the intervention, it is very expensive and economically unsustainable; one unit of filter cost around GHS 140 (USD 31), which is far above the means of these poor households. Due to the sustainability challenges, the entire intervention has been taken off the RING approved activity menu for 2018. In place of the filters and aqua tabs districts are advised to encourage other alternative treatment methods, such as boiling. Aqua tabs are less expensive, but are difficult to find in the rural areas; though they are off the activity menu, districts can still encourage local private sector vendors to carry them in areas where the filter intervention has a past presence.

Table 36 Summary of water filter distribution, by district

District	# of water filters planned (2017)	# of water filters distributed (FY18 Q1)	# of water filters distributed to date (LOP)	# of boxes of aqua tabs planned (2017)	# of boxes of aqua tabs distributed (FY18 Q1)	# of boxes of aqua tabs distributed (LOP)
Central Gonja	0	0	241	0	0	885
Chereponi	180	0	0	360	0	0
East Gonja	150	0	154	150	0	175
Gushegu	250	252	355	500	504	562
Karaga	150	0	327	300	0	683
Kpandai	110	173	173	200	234	234
Kumbungu	0	0	76	0	0	85
Nanumba North	0	0	467	0	0	495
Nanumba South	300	0	526	300	0	540
North Gonja	135	177	281	390	354	460
Sagnarigu	280	0	462	560	216	957
Tamale	300	0	350	300	0	243
West Gonja	0	0	147	0	0	463
Total	1,855	602	3,559	3,060	1,308	5,782

⁵³ The suppliers traveled with the delivery trucks to ensure compliance with mitigation measures as they would be at a loss should breakages occur.

Hand Washing Station Installation

Activity Summary	
<i>Hand Washing Stations and Community Outreach</i>	
<i>Activity Objective:</i> To support RING objectives of improving sanitation and hygiene behaviors among target audiences, RING districts have targeted crèches, kindergartens, and health facilities (i.e. high-traffic areas for children under five and women of reproductive age) to receive at least one hand washing station. This will enable students and health service seekers the opportunity to wash their hands with soap and water on a regular basis.	
<i>Input Support:</i> Each facility receives at least one hand washing station, as well as a stand (both locally-constructed to increase likelihood for sustainability) and sometimes an initial supply of bar soap. During the distributions, the district team will also conduct sensitization on the need for regular hand washing, as well as provide user maintenance education.	
<i>Follow-Up Support:</i> District staff will monitor each facility on a quarterly basis, checking for regular use and any repairs needed.	

The WHO has stated that hand washing with soap at critical periods⁵⁴ reduces incidence of diarrheal diseases by 23% (WHO, 2014)⁵⁵. It is also well-established that there is a negative correlation between good nutrition and incidence of diarrhea, making handwashing with soap crucial for improving nutrition, especially among children under five, who are most susceptible to the ill effects of diarrhea. As a result of the nutritional and health benefits, RING promotes hand washing with soap at both household and institutional levels and, in 2017, sixteen districts planned to install 770 hand washing stations in health facilities and basic schools with kindergartens. During FY18 Q1, six districts installed 204 stations (167 in schools and 37 in health facilities), bringing the total number of hand washing stations installed per the 2017 AWP to 768, representing 99.7% of the 770 planned. The total number of hand washing stations installed in schools and health facilities to date is 1,631 (101% of the LOP target). Based on these figures, the RING project has already exceeded its LOP target. Also, through the implementation of CLTS, RING facilitated installation of over 1,400 locally-constructed household hand washing stations (tippy taps) in FY18 Q1.

All installations were accompanied with sensitization on hand washing at critical times and demonstrations on proper use, maintenance, and care of the equipment. During follow-ups and technical support visits by Global Communities WASH Team and periodic check-ins by Governance Advisors, it was noticed that most of the facilities were being used and taken care of by the beneficiary institutions. Most of the facilities⁵⁶ contained water and had soap by them. During the quarter, District WASH teams collaborated with Agricultural and Nutrition officers to provide hygiene messages and conduct hand washing demonstrations during Orange Flesh Sweet Potato harvest and utilization trainings. Such engagements and demonstrations opened the eyes of the women to the fact that children can still be malnourished if nutritious meals are eaten under unhygienic conditions.

To ensure that hand washing is practiced using the installed facilities and the behavior sustained beyond the life of project, Global Communities RING and its GOG partners (Regional Environment Health and Sanitation Department and implementing MMDAs) will intensify monitoring and sensitization on use, care and maintenance throughout 2018 and 2019.

⁵⁴ After defecation, before cooking, before eating, after handling children's feces, and before preparing children's food.

⁵⁵ WHO (2014) Preventing Diarrhea through better water, sanitation and hygiene: Exposures and impacts in low and middle income countries. Geneva, Switzerland; WHO.

⁵⁶ Facilities were located in Bulpiela Health Center in Tamale, Kumoayili CHPS compound in Karaga, Agape and DA Islamic Primary Schools in East Gonja, Nawugu Day Care and Katani DA Primary Schools in Gushegu, and Nabuni and Tingenga DA Primary Schools in Chereponi.

Table 37 Summary of Hand Washing Station distribution progress, by district (LOP)

District	# of Hand Washing Stations Planned (2017)	# of Hand Washing Stations Installed (FY18 Q1)		# of Hand Washing Stations Installed (2017)	% of Achievement of 2017 Planned Installations	# of Hand Washing Stations Installed (LOP)
		Schools	Health Facilities			
Central Gonja	40	0	0	40	100	95
Chereponi	30	22	10	32	107	52
East Gonja	34	0	0	34	100	57
East Mamprusi	20	0	0	20	100	49
Gushegu	40	0	0	42	105	73
Karaga	0	0	0	0	N/A	10
Kpandai	30	10	20	30	100	30
Kumbungu	52	0	0	52	100	106
Nanumba North	14	10	4	14	100	40
Nanumba South	50	50	0	50	100	168
North Gonja	30	29	3	32	107	95
Saboba	20	0	0	20	100	40
Sagnarigu	120	0	0	113	94	241
Savelugu	30	0	0	30	100	117
Tamale Metro	150	46	0	157	105	257
Tolon	90	0	0	83	92	132
West Gonja	20	0	0	19	95	69
Total	770	167	37	768	99.7%	1,631

WASH Infrastructure

As reported in the FY17 Annual Report, districts had planned a number of efforts related to rainwater harvesting system installation and institutional latrine rehabilitation. Targets for the year were achieved during FY17, per the results in the table below. The deficit for rainwater harvesting systems came from Gushegu, who was unable to cover all planned facilities due to budget deficit.

Table 38 Summary of WASH Infrastructure Achievements in 2017

District	# of Installations Planned	# of Installations Achieved	Completion Rate
Institutional Latrines	26	27	100%
Rainwater Harvesting Systems	56	55	98%

4.3. Component Three

Strengthened local support networks addressing the ongoing needs (nutrition and livelihoods) of vulnerable households.

To close out the year, the Governance Team focused efforts during the quarter on supporting districts to successfully complete their Component 3 activities, particularly as several of them had been shifted to the end of the year. Ongoing efforts in sub-structure strengthening continued and discussions toward the 2018 sustainability strategies began, highlighting the role that functional Area, Zonal, and Town Councils will play in the process. Significant progress was made in gender and social protection activities as well, as district-level officers become more conversant with their roles and understood how to better support GOG priorities under the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. Public Financial Management improvements continued strategically, while community engagement efforts, such as community

forums and the development of Community Action Plans, wrapped up for the year as well. The sections below detail progress from the quarter made in key areas based on district and regional work plans, and the technical support provided by Global Communities RING.

District Sub-Structure Strengthening

During the reporting period, the Global Communities RING Governance Team continued to provide Technical support to MMDAs in completing their sub-structure strengthening (Training of Area Councilors) activities as part of their 2017 implementation. Most major efforts, such as training of sub-structure staff, had been completed for the year and Councils were left to continue their quarterly meetings with technical support from the Planning and Coordinating Units, as well as Global Communities RING.

However, in Saboba, in an effort to revive its sub-structures, the district identified the Kpalba Area Council as one of its most viable and promising Area Councils and subsequently organized a capacity building training for the Councilors. Instead of a quarterly meeting which had been captured in the budget, the district requested support from Global Communities RING to facilitate the now-standard training package. Saboba's Area Councils had been trained on basic procedures in 2015 by a local organization, but the district saw merit in the training package that has been developed by RING and wished to utilize the curriculum for further skills transfer to the Councilors. During the two-day engagement, the Governance Team took the participants through the five standard areas of training, including:

- An overview of the local government system, with an emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders (i.e. District Assemblies, Area Councils, Assembly Members and Unit Committees);
- Environmental health management and sanitation;
- Internal revenue generation and mobilization;
- Community action planning and participatory monitoring and evaluation; and
- Advocacy, lobbying, and social accountability.

The training methodology was mixed and interactive, with presentations, group exercises and plenary discussions using both English and predominant local languages (Likpakpaln and Dagbani). At the end of the training, the Councilors were also supported to develop action plans that are to guide their activities post training. The table below provides a consolidated attendance summary.

Table 39 Attendance Summary for Kpalba Area Council Training (Saboba District)

Saboba District	# of Officers Trained		
	Male	Female	Total
Unit Committee/Assembly Members	33	0	33
District Assembly	1	0	1
Global Communities RING	3	0	3
Total	37	0	37

Discussion points that emerged during the training and were addressed by the DPCU and facilitators included:

- The lack of proper office accommodation for Councilors;

- Lack of capacity and experience in their roles, especially among the Unit Committee Members (community-level representatives) – as this is for many their first term in office, they are not familiar with the dynamics of the local government system and will need additional coaching and supportive follow-ups from the DA;
- Lack of effective communication between the District Assembly and sub-district structures, making the Area Councils redundant as they are not able to participate effectively in the decision-making process and disseminate information to the communities; and
- Issues of transparency and accountability regarding internally generated funds (IGF).

The challenges identified and enumerated by the Councilors are similar to those identified in other RING districts for which Global Communities RING is supporting the districts to take concrete steps to resolve moving forward.

Following the 2017 capacity building trainings provided to Area Councils in Gushegu (Gushegu, Zantile and Galiwei), Nanumba North (Gmantambu, Kumbo), and Karaga (Pishigu, Zandua) under the RING pilot program, the Governance Team reached out to the respective DPCUs to schedule review visits to each Area Council trained. These visits will provide Global Communities RING and the MMDAs the opportunity to assess progress made against their action plans and address any lingering gaps in the Area Council functionality.

Area Council Quarterly Meetings

During the quarter, MMDAs, with technical assistance from the Global Communities RING Governance Team, continued to support their Area Council via quarterly meetings at the sub-district level. While some districts were able to adhere to their plans, some districts missed several planned meetings throughout the year. Most of these challenges stemmed from getting a later start in 2017 than planned, resulting in districts missing their planned first quarter meeting, as well as challenges with accessing funds for their fourth quarter meetings. Additionally, the District Planning Officer is often the one responsible for arranging these meetings and requesting funds to carry them out; their dual role as the RING Focal Person sometimes causes scheduling conflicts, resulting in delayed implementation of Governance activities. Where DPOs have effectively delegated responsibilities to other officers, these scheduling issues are minimized.

Though the results for the quarter are minimal due to funding challenges, districts managed to hold 229 of the 316 planned quarterly meetings over the course of 2017, representing a 72% completion rate. Though this figure may seem low, there are multiple valid reasons for the implementation gaps, most notably the challenges in receiving funding for the final quarter of the year. Other districts, such as Karaga, East Mamprusi, and Chereponi, did not request for or receive training in all Area Councils until mid-year, limiting the number of times the Area Councils could meet afterward. Finally, some districts like Central Gonja faced challenges early in the year due to the change in government. Based on successes in 2016, they planned for full implementation in 2017. However, there was some contention (and some still exists in several Area Councils) over the political affiliation of some previously-trained Councilors, leading to delays in the intervention that Global Communities RING could not effectively address given our politically neutral stance and the highly contentious nature of local politics. District-by-district specifics of achievements and explanations for shortfalls can be found in Annex A.

Of those meetings that were able to take place, they tended to focus on updates from the District Assembly, and on key challenges and issues raised by community members, ensuring a direct line of communication between the constituents and their local government

representatives. Though each meeting covered topics specific to that sub-district, Global Communities RING identified some key discussion points across districts, namely:

- The necessary harmonization of CAPs into Area Council Plans;
- How to improve IGF mobilization; and
- Devising strategies to solve the mounting sanitation challenges in the communities.

While Area Council Plan development is ongoing at various stages in each district, IGF and sanitation issues are larger issues that require more strategic thought. Having identified the key role that the Area Councils could play in ensuring the sustainability of many interventions when RING closes, Global Communities RING would in the coming months, and with the release of funds for 2018 implementation, provide capacity building to those same sub-structures on Local Economic Development (LED). This will especially be targeted at those that have shown promise and indicate they are more receptive and willing to the tasks that would be required of them to truly mobilize and manage local funding. This training package will guide Councilors to identify locally-appropriate strategies to improve revenue mobilization efforts, providing the critical funding required to maintain general operations after the close of the project. Though 2018 promises to be a year that is very light on training and includes more emphasis on monitoring, supportive supervision, and timely documentation of implementation gaps and methods used to address them, the Governance Team also recognizes the value in strategically layering capacity building efforts to targeted audiences. The LED training package is not a curriculum that could be delivered effectively to a group of inexperienced Councilors; it requires some level of knowledge of carrying out the most basic roles and responsibilities.

Sanitation issues raised were of particular relevance to RING priority areas and it is a good sign that community members are now consistently identifying this as a major challenge; the belief is that, once they recognize poor sanitation, such as open defecation and indiscriminate waste dumping, as a problem, they will be more enthusiastic and receptive to means of resolving it. In 2018, Global Communities RING will continue its collaboration with the REHSU, as well as districts that have performed well under CLTS to fully scale-up the Natural Leaders Network pilot. Though not operated directly through district sub-structures, districts often use Area Council demarcations to select the Natural Leaders groups, ensuring the entire district (where feasible) has good coverage and that the expanding effect of the approach will ensure a more rapid achievement of district-wide ODF. A functional Area Council would also mean that one or more Environmental Health Officers would be posted to support CLTS efforts, including triggering of new communities and monitoring of OD and ODF localities.

A secondary issue that ties the two together is how the district can generate revenue through tariffs on poor sanitation and lack of adherence to sanitation by-laws. In 2018, the REHSU has proposed a targeted district capacity building effort toward the enforcement of existing sanitation by-laws, which requires regular monitoring, issuing of citations, and even pursuing matters through legal channels. This is an area that will require intense coordination between the various MMDA actors, as well as the REHSU and other regional departments responsible for the enforcement of these measures.

Public Financial Management

In 2017, six MMDAs achieved 100% marks in addressing identified public financial management (PFM) risks, bringing the total number of local government partners that have fully addressed their PFM risks to ten of eighteen. The remaining eight GOG partners have achieved 75% or higher marks and have included in their 2018 work plans the requisite trainings or steps that

need to be taken to address the remaining PFM issues (i.e. development of an IT Strategic Policy & Plan and conducting Budget Variance and Reporting trainings). During the quarter, Global Communities RING continued to monitor the progress of all districts to ensure there is no relapse of the risks that they had previously addressed.

Though not all GOG partners under RING have fully addressed their PFM risk mitigations, there has been notable progress made in several areas, namely:

- *Budget Management:* RING MMDAs Budget Units now appreciate the importance of preparing budget variance reports, which include narratives stating the reasons for such variances. They understand that budget monitoring reports are a control mechanism which aids senior management in decision-making and have made significant improvements in the quality of their quarterly programmatic reports, ensuring that major variances in expenditures are noted. Their activity report sections within the liquidation reports to USAID have also notably improved over the life of the project.
- *Annual Work Plan & Budget preparation:* Since the start of the project, each MMDAs' skill level in the preparation of their RING AWP's have significantly improved, with officers appreciating the importance of coordinating with other stakeholders during the budget setting process, as well as setting realistic budgets and plans, projecting cash needs according to the timelines, and tying the activities back to GOG and community identified priority areas (i.e. linkages to MTDPs, CAPs, AAPs, etc.).
- *Asset Management:* Through the implementation of the risk mitigation plans, MMDAs now recognize the importance of keeping a robust asset management system, so as to minimize waste of financial resources to acquire these same assets year by year. Currently, all MMDAs have an electronic fixed asset register which includes all the relevant information of assets purchased with RING support in accordance with GOG Financial Regulations (PFM Act 2016 (act 921); Accounting Manual for MMDAs (ch. 14). This register enables them in their asset planning and tracking of assets, to ensure that their field monitoring systems are strengthening and to avoid the wastage of financial resources.
- *Audit Findings:* The recent RING MMDAs audit findings noted an average of 3-5 findings per districts with no material findings that led to a qualified audit opinion. This demonstrates that the implementation of the risk mitigation plans have further strengthened the internal control systems, thereby having a positive impact on their performance. As with any entity, risks will be present, but the implementation of the risk mitigation plans have provided MMDAs awareness to proactively observe for emerging risks and develop strategies to mitigate.

Each of the above-listed areas is an area of improvement. However, Global Communities RING recognizes that additional work in PFM must continue due to the systems strengthening nature of the overall activity. In the coming quarter, the Governance Team will coordinate with USAID and the NRCC to develop a follow-up checklist to better systematize the supportive monitoring provided. This checklist will also be used to grade GOG partners' performance and provide a Certification of PFM Excellence. The certification will be used as a motivational tool to ensure district and regional partners continue to adhere to the sound financial management practices that they have achieved under RING. A tentative timeline for the rollout of the tool includes drafting in January to mid-February, a test of the tool in late-February, a brief revision period, and initiating rollout before the close of FY18 Q2.

Institution of the ReFMIC

The Resource and Financial Management Improvement Committee (ReFMIC) was formed by USAID and Global Communities RING in 2017 to support the project's efforts in defining

efficient and effective strategies to address financial management gaps in MMDA financial systems concerning general RING operations. The committee formally met once during the quarter, but have been working via e-mail and other engagements, sharing ideas and additional priorities. Key among the activities ReFMIC focused on are:

- Preparing a concept note on Fleet Management meant to ensure efficient allocation and use of fuel at the district level by insisting MMDAs follow GOG vehicle log book management procedures;
- Facilitating an orientation program aimed at deepening the understanding of newly-posted MMDCDs regarding RING procedures and galvanizing their support for project success;
- Facilitating the compilation and revision of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) prepared by USAID and Global Communities RING, a document which will be key in guiding project implementation in 2018 and beyond;
- Providing guidance to districts on the completion of their 2018 Procurement Plans in line with their Cash Profiles; and
- Preparing a capacity building plan for 2018 based on the findings of the RING External Audit Report; from this, ReFMIC proposed that notes from the Exit Meetings prepared by the GC RING and USAID teams should be used to identify capacity needs prior to the completion of the External Audit Reports as ReFMIC anticipates a delay in the release of the report and is trying to ensure that eventually the findings and recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.

ReFMIC will continue to meet periodically to discuss and make recommendations to address financial management challenges in line with its mandate.

G2G Transition Workshop

During the quarter under review, the Governance Team, in collaboration with the NRCC and the Tamale-based USAID RING Team, organized an orientation on the G2G funding mechanism for the two newly-admitted G2G districts, North Gonja and Gushegu. The presentation was prepared and executed by both USAID and Global Communities RING, while Global Communities and the NRCC handled the administrative and logistic aspects of both district-level meetings. Instead of the consolidated regional event that took place in 2016, RING opted to conduct the workshops at the district level to ensure all critical staff could attend and that the training was delivered in a cost-effective manner. Those in attendance at both meetings were: the Coordinating Director, Finance Officer, RING Project Accountant, RING Project Focal Persons, and activity leads (i.e. VSLA focal person, CLTS focal person, Gender Desk Officer, etc.). Key areas covered at the workshop were: cost principles, common challenges to avoid, the advance and liquidation cycle, and the financial management reporting format.

The presence of all the implementing department at the workshop afforded the entire district team the opportunity to understand the G2G funding mechanism and the responsibilities of all stakeholders to ensure that funds are released on time for project implementation and liquidation reports presented in a timely manner. Attendee engagement was significant for both sessions, with the relaxed format allowing for more discussion between programmatic and administrative staff at the district, as well as allowing facilitators ample time to address any concerns or areas of uncertainty.



Photo 17 Global Communities RING's Jacob Ntiamoah discusses allowable and unallowable costs during the North Gonja District workshop

One area that was extensively discussed was the need for the District RING Focal Person to collaborate effectively with the RING Project Accountant to ensure funds on hand and funds requested were a true reflection of actual needs, rather than what the work plan indicated. Participants agreed that a presentation of the financial report should be incorporated into the teams' monthly RING coordination meetings, ensuring that all implementation facets were covered. Another area that generated discussion was 'allowable' versus 'unallowable' costs. For example, payment of fines, donations, and traditional

protocols-payments to local chiefs (i.e. presentation of kola) were identified as 'unallowable' costs. Facilitators further explained that, if these items were unavoidable, the district should cover the costs themselves and note the expense within their Host Country Contribution log. Though the workshop was highly informative, in the next several quarters, Global Communities RING and USAID Finance teams will need to provide hands on support to both districts as they work through their first rounds of liquidation and financial reporting.

The training in North Gonja coincided with the RING Mid-Term Evaluation Team's visit to Tamale. As such, Global Communities RING invited the lead investigator and her METSS colleague to join to give them a practical sense of the environment, as well as the type of technical support that is provided through the G2G process. Feedback from the evaluation team indicated that the field trip, though time-consuming, was worth it, as it afforded them the opportunity to observe and better inform their research questions.

Facilitation of Asset Management Training

Upon the request of Chereponi, Gushegu, and Karaga District Assemblies, the Global Communities RING Municipal Finance Specialists facilitated three district-level refresher trainings on Fixed Asset Management. Participants for the workshops included all Heads of Departments, as well as RING Focal Persons. The key objectives of each training were to ensure that the district Fixed Asset Management procedures were in compliance with the GoG legal and administrative systems, and that procedures for maintaining and keeping assets and movement of assets were understood and being implemented. The sessions were participatory and topics included fixed asset management and the asset life cycle. Facilitators utilized practical examples of case studies to work through sometimes complicated aspects of asset management. There was also a practical work session for the review of the DA's RING Fixed Asset Register. The participants appreciated the training and indicated their commitment to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired during the refresher workshop.

Gender Activity Progress



Photo 18 Ruth Jalilu, Saboba District Gender Desk Officer, delivers a message on women's time burden during a community sensitization effort.

In 2017, there were a number of gender activities planned for and carried out across all RING districts. Most of the activities were aligned to RING, USAID, and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) gender priorities. These activities took the form of district- and sub-structure-level trainings on gender mainstreaming, formation and meeting of regional and district gender support networks (GSN), and community engagements using various mediums, such as focus group discussions, radio shows, community-wide durbars, and role-playing.

With regard to 2017 planned district efforts, 14 of the 17 districts were able to carry out all planned activities. Those

three that fell short of their original goals did so for a number of reasons. For instance, against technical advice from Global Communities RING, Saboba planned to carry out community sensitizations in a total of 75 communities, but were only able to complete this in 43 communities constituting about 58% of their plan implementation; due to time constraints, the funds had to be realigned to other areas. Tamale had a change in strategy at mid-year as they decided to realign all their funding to carry out a training for community representatives on women's participation in decision making, an area they felt particularly relevant to Metropolitan households. Unfortunately, Chereponi was unable to start any of their planned gender activities due to several factors, including a late start for 2017 planned implementation, compounded by the inclusion of agriculture activities just as the planting season was beginning; this caused the majority of focus to be put on successfully completing the Component 1 activities while those falling under Component 3 and good governance were shifted to later in the year. This is not uncommon, as Component 3 activities are rarely time-sensitive, but it is a trend that, by and large, has faded away as districts become more accustomed to implementing their work plans according to schedule. In 2017, Chereponi was a unique case with the late implementation of the 2017 subcontract (due to an extension with the 2016 subcontract) and the additional modification for agriculture activities. The same situation is shaping up for 2018 and Global Communities RING will be cognizant of this challenge when supporting the district to develop their work plan and implementation timelines.

Conversely, Kumbungu was able to exceed their targets for gender, reaching nine communities as opposed to the planned three with various discussion topics. Their Gender Desk Officer (GDO) is passionate about her work and has been able to use allocated funds sparingly, as well as lobby for the additional funding required for these achievements. Her efforts, along with those of other enthusiastic GDOs, are commendable and will be highlighted at the appropriate forum (i.e. any upcoming regional meetings where they can share their strategies with other officers who may be struggling to perform their roles). The table in Annex B provides a detailed summary of each district's progress against their annual work plans and activities that had been realigned to support gender efforts. Briefly, some highlights from the year are:

- A number of community sensitizations (data still forthcoming from December activities) held on key Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) priorities, such as women's engagement in government, girls' access to education, as well as RING-specific priorities of women's time burden demands, their control over household resources, and their role in decision-making for the home;
- Seven MMDAs received training on gender mainstreaming for development planning, which was key as 2017 featured a large portion of the preparatory work for the District Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP), which are a work in progress; and
- Eleven engagements at the Area Council level, making use of the district sub-structures to disseminate key gender information to stakeholders, such as Assembly Members, Unit Committee Members, and any civic-minded citizens that attend the open forums.

Generally, there has been an improvement in the quality of implementation of gender activities in most DAs as compared to other implementation periods. This is due in large part to the early start many GDOs had in comparison to previous years – agriculture interventions tend to take up the majority of district focus mid-season, so implementation of other areas, such as governance and nutrition, must be strategically placed during the first and fourth quarters of the calendar year. Additionally, Global Communities RING and the Regional Department of Gender (RDOG) have become more strategic about the support they provide. RDOG undertook a number of monitoring visits in 2017 and used the information pulled from GDO interviews and observations made in the field to develop the agendas for any regional events. In this regard, the capacity building was more tailored instead of covering generic themes. For instance, while lobbying and advocacy have been covered in the past, this year the support centered on how the GDOs could engage with the Planning Unit and Heads of Department to include their strategies in the MTDPs (as noted above). Districts also regularly called upon the region and Global Communities RING for support when carrying out activities, based on their needs.

A few challenges were however observed during the period, including: late prioritization of gender activities (as is the case in Chereponi) due to pressing needs of the agricultural season; some GDOs left their post without due notification or handover (Tamale and Chereponi); and persisting logistical challenges, such as a lack of regular access to motorbikes, laptops, and tablets for field work. Global Communities RING will strategize with the districts affected, as well as the RDOG, to address these issues and improve 2018 performance.

Gender Model Family

Several districts planned to carry out activities related to the Gender Model Family (GMF) in 2017, though each were at differing levels of implementation. In East Gonja, for instance, the GDO and District Gender Support Network (GSN) planned to carry out the activity in two communities. They selected Adamupe and Kpolo as ideal communities based on their previous positive experiences with men and women through other RING activities. The district undertook community sensitization and though it was largely attended by women (75 to 15, comparatively), they were able to recruit 10 families to participate. As is standard with the model, the families were trained on the basic GMF concept which promotes husband and wife partnership dynamics and is designed to decrease unfair workloads on the women as the husband becomes involved in more domestic efforts, such as child caregiving. In Nanumba South, the district was further along, after having piloted the effort on their own in 2016. This year, they opted to work in 3 communities (285 people sensitized overall), and were able to recruit 15-25 families into the model in each community. Though West Gonja did not include new communities in their 2017 efforts, they continued monitoring the 256 households in 32 communities that were engaged in 2016. Areas of focus during monitoring included how the

husbands and wives could support one another with agricultural activities, especially those that had benefitted from RING interventions (though not exclusively), such as small ruminants, soybeans, and groundnuts, as well as household contributions toward VSLA.

In each district, the district provided regular household monitoring and the families typically met as a group on a quarterly basis, as well as at the end of the year to discuss the progress made and the challenges with the intervention. While both husbands and wives largely reported that they have a better marital relationship and more peace and tranquility in the home, women favor the intervention because of the additional support their husbands provide, while the men still face challenges with community stigma of doing 'women's work.' By and large, however, they will remain committed to these principles they have learned and understand that for true social change to happen more time must be given for the community to see the benefit.

Regional Department of Gender Efforts

In 2017, the department complemented district level efforts by providing capacity building support for the district Gender Desk Officers, as well as technical guidance on a number of activities, such as trainings, and other engagements with district stakeholders. The RDOG facilitated some regional events, such as GDO sensitization on the National Gender Policy and 2017 progress review meetings. As mentioned above, the RDOG also conducted training for GDOs on capacity gaps and GDO priorities identified during monitoring. Through these efforts, the department successfully built the capacity of GDOs to understand the necessary protocols and guidelines, institutional frameworks and policies and procedures that support the work of the GDOs at the district level. GDOs also learned and shared relevant information about their roles and challenges and how they can apply their advocacy skills to garner support from district leadership. The main support they seek is to ensure their plans are included in the MTDPs and to be allocated funds to implement these plans when the District Common Fund arrives.

Aside from technical support to districts, the RDOG used radio to conduct mass sensitization on the global "16 Days of Activism," making sure to discuss RING gender priority areas. The department also organized and facilitated quarterly Regional Gender Support Network Meetings. This year, the GSN meeting was opened to additional stakeholders and attracted the expertise of key actors in gender mainstreaming including NGOs such as Action Aid and RAINS, and interest from advocacy groups in both statal and para-statal departments, including the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, National Commission for Civic Education, Legal Aid Ghana, and the Regional Department of Social Welfare. Practical issues on gender were discussed, solutions brainstormed and deliberated upon to find the best way to resolve critical issues in all communities and in the Northern Region. These meetings were carried out on three occasions during the year (once during FY18 Q1).

Key challenges that affected smooth facilitation of regional gender activities for 2017 were transportation and low human resources. The department has a weak pickup truck that limits their reach for distant communities for continuous monitoring, putting urban districts at an advantage over the more far-flung MMDAs. RDOG is also managed by one officer, with ad hoc support from the former director, who is now on retirement. The Acting Director's engagement with a number of gender-focused efforts throughout the region limits her ability to regularly engage with RING district GDOs. We believe the additional support from the Gender and Social Protection Advisor who will arrive in Tamale in Q2 will alleviate this challenge for the interim.

Social Protection

In a continuation of 2017 efforts that were realigned following the July workshop hosted by the Regional Department of Social Welfare (RDSW), fourteen districts were able to implement key portions of their revised action plans. These activities were refocused from original plans to more closely align with priority areas from the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MOGCP). Key activities implemented included formation and training of District and Community Social Protection Committees (D/CSPC), support for National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) registration, community forums and household monitoring on a number of topics, and monitoring day care centers (DCC). Though some districts have minor activities remaining (i.e. quarterly monitoring efforts, a few lingering community forums), the majority of the 17 MMDAs were able to successfully complete their realigned work plans for 2017.

During the quarter, five districts (Gushegu, Savelugu, Sagnarigu, East Gonja, and Kumbungu) were able to conduct their planned DSPC meetings. Based on reports from District Social Welfare Officers, some of the key issues consistently raised were an inter-departmental approach to resolving shortage/malfunctioning of NHIS bio-metric machines, lobbying of financial institutions to provide more Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) payment machines, and enforcement of bye-laws to prevent child marriage and other forms of child abuse. During the community monitoring, access to the registration points for NHIS and payment points for LEAP is lamented consistently as a main challenge by community members. Given the poor transportation networks in many of RING's partner districts, this is not a surprising report. Now that shortages have been more or less documented by each district, Global Communities RING will coordinate with the RDSW in the coming quarter to devise the most appropriate way to address these shortfalls. In the past, some districts have been able to successfully lobby their district officers for the addition of one or two additional biometric registration machines. However, the need is likely much greater across the board than the district-level offices can address on their own. Global Communities RING believes the best approach would be for the region to develop a consolidated request letter to pose to the respective national offices, detailing regional need⁵⁷ and a district-by-district distribution plan.

One additional challenge that emerged during follow up from monitoring is that numerous district NHI Administration offices are out of health insurance cards or printing supplies for new registrants. Global Communities RING discovered this challenge late in the quarter and has since encouraged district officers to lobby the district insurance offices on a speedy replenishment of their inventory. When a full inventory check is completed for all 17 MMDAs, Global Communities RING will coordinate with the Regional Social Welfare Office on next steps as there may be a possibility to shift some supplies from districts that have a surplus of cards to those that do not have any. This will require engagement with the Regional Office for the National Health Insurance Administration.

For those officers that were able to support NHIS registration, an additional merging challenge is the new policy that all LEAP beneficiaries that are enrolled onto NHIS at no cost must be validated and approved at the national level. District officers reported that this used not to be the case, but since the implementation of this new policy, there is a significant lag time between when the LEAP (or other program) recipient is 'registered' and when they can actually access the service. Global Communities RING will again need to liaise with the regional department to

⁵⁷ Perhaps including non-RING districts as well as the remaining 9 Northern Region MMDAs would be able to do a quick desk review of additional machines needed.

determine the veracity of these complaints. If this is a national policy, we must support districts to find the most effective way to work within the regulations.

In addition to the Social Protection Committee Meetings, nine districts organized community forums on a number of topics, including child rights awareness, improved maternal and child nutrition, child marriage and rights for persons with disabilities (PWD). In total, 70 forums were held, reaching more than 5,200 individuals. The table below shows details of each district's efforts. Next steps for FY18 Q1 include follow-up on the communities that received these outreaches to see what sort of impact, if any, has occurred as a result.

Table 40 Summary of Community Outreach Events Organized during FY18 Q1

District	# of Communities	# of Participants			Topic Discussed
		Female	Male	Total	
Gushegu	15	623	218	841	Dangers of child labor and child marriages
Karaga	2	98	54	152	PWDs rights and responsibilities formation of PWD associations at Area Councils
Kpandai	3	40	55	95	Women participation in decision making PWD participation in productive ventures
Kumbungu	9	529	455	984	Child rights awareness, immunization, improved nutrition
Nanumba North	5	158	126	284	Child rights promotion
Nanumba South	5	234	178	412	Child trafficking awareness creation
Saboba	16	658	434	1092	LEAP case management
Savelugu-Nanton	5	311	161	472	Education and health opportunities for PWDs
Tamale	10	653	256	909	Registration of PWDs; sensitization on rights and responsibilities of PWDs; rights awareness for children used as beggars

Regarding social protection, district efforts this quarter have been on supportive monitoring and follow-up of RING beneficiary households, particularly those that overlap with LEAP communities. Based on preliminary district reports, a total of 377 communities and 8,209 households were monitored across all 17 districts. Areas covered during the monitoring included household linkages with social safety nets (VSLA was nearly universal), support to households in addressing challenges with NHIS registration and renewals, supporting access to birth certificate registration, any noted LEAP payout errors, etc.

Notable accomplishments from this quarter include more than 4,200 people received support to register for NHIS, while over 1,800 existing NHIS registrants were supported to address challenges in accessing services (e.g. replacement of expired membership cards, picture errors on the cards, supporting the creation of more registration points to reduce the distance for people to travel). Regarding LEAP beneficiaries, 143 had their program information updated, including a change in primary recipient and secondary care giver data, as well as E-zwich card replacement to reduce payout errors and delays. These solutions were provided in direct response to monitoring data from previous field efforts.

Table 41 Summary of Community Monitoring and Follow Up Efforts by District

District	# of Communities monitored	# of HH Monitored	Areas Covered During Monitoring	# of HHs Supported to Register with NHIS	# of HHs Supported to Address NHIS Challenges
Central Gonja	32	309	VSLA access, LEAP service delivery	14	11
Chereponi	62	1,210	VSLA membership, LEAP payment related issues, co-responsibilities of household members	841	215
East Gonja	29	398	Grants utilization, challenges with fund receipts, NHIS registration	168	398
East Mamprusi	23	256	NHIS registration or support with challenges	12	30
Gushegu	20	416	NHIS registration, school enrolment, payment issues	0	52
Karaga	9	Not Available	Irresponsible parenting (school attendance, emerging drug use), ANC attendance	0	0
Kpandai	30	1203	NHIS registration, social safety nets	0	0
Kumbungu	20	378	NHIS registration and usage, errors of inclusion and exclusion, etc.	0	25
Nanumba North	15	758	School enrolment, NHIS enrolment, under-5 immunization, fostering issues, etc.	1,334	251
Nanumba South	5	221	NHIS card expiration and renewal, school enrolment, LEAP payment irregularities.	223	10
North Gonja	6	116	Linkage to social safety nets, NHIS enrolment, LEAP grant utilization.	0	22
Saboba	19	703	LEAP payment related issues, co-responsibilities	672	300
Savelugu-Nanton	20	417	Registration and enrolment of NHIS, school enrolment	266	120
Sagnarigu	12	415	Roles and responsibilities of DSPC and CSPCs	0	0
Tamale	29	199	Monitoring of enrollment of school children, NHIS registration and usage, payment complaints, etc.	31	191
Tolon	25	600	NHIS registration or support with challenges	20	100
West Gonja	21	710	Identification and linking of beneficiaries to other social safety nets, errors of inclusion and exclusion	546	71

This quarter, Global Communities RING introduced a brief reporting tool for District Officers to capture their accomplishments from the period. This stemmed from the current gap RING has in

our approach to monitoring and systematically reporting on social protection efforts. In the coming quarter, RING, along with the RDSW and input from the district officers, will introduce 2-3 indicators on social protection to the Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This will ensure that the social protection efforts undertaken are duly captured and progress is monitored in more systematic way. The Governance Team had to draft this rapid reporting tool with input from the region and key district stakeholders as there are not currently consolidated district reports that would necessarily capture this information in its simplified format (some information exists within larger reporting formats, but RING would not have ready access to these). We are still exploring options to use existing GOG tools, however, as we wish to minimize the addition of new paperwork into the system. Global Communities RING welcomes any feedback that USAID has on the tool, which is included in Annex C.

RING-LEAP VSLA Overlap Efforts

Given the project's success with the VSLA intervention and its near-100% coverage of all RING beneficiary households with over a year of implementation left, in FY18, Global Communities RING has proposed to extend its efforts into LEAP households throughout the RING partner districts. To support further planning for this, during the quarter, UNICEF shared a LEAP document with the Global Communities RING Team containing a community-level summary of LEAP households, by district. The format was easier to analyze than the combination of hand-written, and soft and hard copies of documents that have been shared by MMDA teams thus far and RING was easily able to identify approximately 540 'LEAP only' communities with a further estimated 530 communities where both RING and LEAP overlap. In December, Global Communities RING presented this update in Accra to a small forum including representatives from USAID, UNICEF and the World Bank – all partners with large investments in social protection efforts in Ghana. Final figures on the total number of households and beneficiaries is still being compiled.

Early in January, the Governance Team will coordinate with the Global Communities RING Livelihoods Team to engage with district VSLA teams during the annual review forum. This platform provides the perfect opportunity to introduce the overlap goals and seek input and advice from district and regional stakeholders on the roll out strategy. Based on the FY18 work plan, Global Communities RING has a target of supporting an additional 1,000 VSLAs formed from LEAP beneficiaries, and supporting any other beneficiaries in overlap communities to join a RING VSLA, if possible.

Regional Department of Social Welfare Coordination

During the quarter, strong collaboration between Global Communities RING and the RDSW continued. The Governance Team met with regional stakeholders on several occasions, both formally and informally, to discuss progress of the social protection district and regional agendas, as well as to prepare for planned trainings. The Regional Department also supported Global Communities RING to gather and collate the Q1 monitoring reports from the district officers. Submission to the project office, however, was late, so the region was not as involved in the analysis of the field reports for the summation of this report as the Governance Team would have liked. However, the Team does plan to meet with them in mid-Q2 to discuss the findings and any ways that we can strategically support districts to address any challenges they have identified.

During the quarter, the RDSW held its two final trainings from their 2017 work plan; one training covered basic ICT skills (i.e. use of Microsoft Office) for district officers, while the other

supported an introduction to an e-data collection platform that the Ministry has recently developed. Global Communities RING provided the most support during the ICT training, which faced challenges with late organization and last-minute changes in facilitators. Despite these issues, district attendees were highly-engaged in the information relayed as many of them had never been formally trained on computer use and are largely self-taught. The sessions on Excel and incorporations of basic formulas for basic calculations was especially relevant as most officers had been drafting tables in Word and doing manual calculation. Following the ICT training, Governance Advisors noted provided additional support to interested staff in continuing their use of Excel. They used the program to draft some of their GOG reports for the quarter and Global Communities RING provided some backstopping support.

The e-data training was a new initiative to Global Communities RING, so our presence was also for learning from the national-level facilitators. The training itself was well-organized and the agenda included an overview of the program and how it can be integrated into household monitoring, as well as hands on practical sessions using tablets that the district officers brought. This training was a basic introduction to the tool and will require additional support. It was also Global Communities RING's first exposure to the platform, so further follow-up will be required on the part of our technical team in order to adequately support both the region and the districts with the rollout.

A continuing challenge that Global Communities RING faces with the Regional Department is the late notification of trainings. The region is consistent in requesting for Global Communities RING's input on the agenda, support in developing curricula, and even co-facilitating sessions. However, the advance notification is often little more than a few days, which prevents either team from strategizing in the most effective manner. In the coming implementation cycle, this is something that Global Communities RING will work more closely with the region to improve. More frequent engagements may be a solution, but also requesting for updates from the RPCU if any trainings funds have been released may be another avenue.

Community Engagement – Community Action Plans

During the reporting period, RING partner districts have continued with the harmonization and finalization of community action plans (CAP) with technical support from the Global Communities RING Governance Team. A few of the districts have been able to harmonize the CAPs at the Area Council level, while some are still putting finishing touches to their draft CAPs. This Area Council-level harmonization will be a priority later in FY18 as it ties directly into the sub-structure strengthening and sustainability efforts of the project.

Within the last quarter of the year, the number of CAPs prepared and finalized for RING communities has increased to 972, representing 75% of all communities targeted by the project. As some districts have achieved at or near 100% coverage of RING communities, they have expanded the intervention to non-RING communities in an effort to fulfil GOG mandates of covering at least 50% of all communities within their district. The expansion has been undertaken strategically to ensure that all Area Councils within the district have a representative number of CAPs for effective harmonization into Area Councils Action Plans. These plans are the intermediary step between community- and district-level Medium Term Development Plans. During the targeting phase of RING start-up, Area Council distribution played a role in community selection, but its weight against other vulnerability indicators, such as communicable disease prevalence or market and healthcare accessibility, was limited. Cumulatively, RING has supported districts to develop CAPs for 46% of their 2,995 communities overall, which by the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) guidelines is approaching the required coverage.

Based on these achievements, Global Communities RING has recommended in 2018 that districts with a high coverage of CAPs (50% or more of their overall communities) to focus on Area Council level harmonization of the completed CAPs; this advice was incorporated into districts' 2018 AWP, which will ensure that each of the major catchment areas has a practical development plan with strategically integrated agriculture, livelihoods, nutrition and WASH activities. The availability of this plan also provides a roadmap for Area Councilors to operate from regarding practical development issues that they may be able to address on their own. The table below provides a summary of CAPs achievements to date.

Table 42 Summary of CAPs progress by district, over LOP

District	# of Communities in the District	# of CAPs/ Coverage	% of Communities Covered with CAPs	# of RING Target Communities	# of RING Target Communities with CAPs	% of RING Target Communities with CAPs
Central Gonja	265	94	35%	77	58	75%
Chereponi	187	187 ⁵⁸	100%	58	58	100%
East Gonja	293	80	27%	100	80	80%
East Mamprusi	142	90	63%	77	77	100%
Gushegu	395	50	5%	113	50	44%
Karaga	160	80	50%	100	80	80%
Kpandai	245	122	29%	100	100	100%
Kumbungu	115	31	40%	77	31	40%
Nanumba North	197	70	61%	50	70 ⁵⁹	100%
Nanumba South	147	20	14%	64	20	31%
North Gonja	64	45	70%	64	45	70%
Saboba	257	257 ⁶⁰	100%	50	50	100%
Sagnarigu	79	35	43%	76	35	46%
Savelugu-Nanton	149	36	24%	65	36 ⁶¹	55%
Tamale	117	50	28%	64	50	78%
Tolon	109	84	82%	84	84	100%
West Gonja	74	40	39%	48	40	83%
Totals	2,995	1,371	43%	1,267	972	75%

Based on the figures above, several districts have made notable achievements in covering their RING target communities. Twelve districts have covered 70% or more of RING communities, with East Mamprusi, Nanumba North, Tolon, Chereponi, Kpandai, and Saboba achieving 100% coverage. By the close of the year, 360 CAPs have been completed, with just 20 in the final development stages in West Gonja, an indication of a near 100% achievement. Due to low CAPs coverage and the higher number of smaller communities, Chereponi and Saboba instead prepared Electoral Area Action Plans to enable them cover more communities during the MTDP preparation. District like Gushegu and Nanumba South, with much lower coverage at 44% and 31%, respectively, only recently began CAPs efforts as part of their RING AWP; they have since included additional CAPs in their 2018 plans to make up the deficit. With enhanced technical capacity and support with the simplified CAP data collection tool, Kpandai has been able to develop an additional 50 CAPs, enabling them to gather enough data for their MTDP preparation. The Global Communities RING Governance Team will continue to support CAPs

58 Due to low CAPs coverage and a higher number of smaller communities, the Chereponi District instead prepared 20 Electoral Area Action Plans to enable them cover all 187 communities during the MTDP preparation. Hence, all the 58 RING communities have been covered since they fall under the 20 electoral areas.

59 In Nanumba North, 70 CAPs have been prepared for individual communities clustered into 50 RING beneficiary communities.

60 Saboba has also prepared 25 Electoral Area Action Plans to cover all the 257 communities in the District

61 Savelugu-Nanton has still not been able to submit the completed CAPs to Global Communities RING

development by MMDAs, ensuring that communities are prompted to consider nutrition, WASH, livelihoods, and agriculture priorities, and that feedback from vulnerable populations (poor households, women, etc.) is not only solicited, but incorporated into these development plans.

With 2017 being the development planning year for MMDAs, Global Communities RING has worked with districts to ensure they incorporate feedback from CAPs and other sources (i.e. Citizens Forums, Area Council Meetings, and Community Consultations) into the Medium Term Development Plans for 2018-2021. This has been communicated to them and the Governance Team has made follow-ups to ensure this data are analyzed and duly incorporated into the plans. Governance Team members have also participated in the MTDP performance review meetings and public hearings in order to make critical inputs into the plan preparation and finalization. In most of these meetings, the emphasis has also been on the need for districts to incorporate citizens' felt needs and aspirations into the MTDPs, with particular focus on nutrition, WASH, livelihoods and agriculture priorities. Districts give these suggestions high priorities as they are typically voiced in the presence of numerous stakeholders, thus increasing the level of accountability on them to respond to identified priorities.

Regarding timelines, districts are expected to submit their first draft MTDPs to the Regional Coordinating Council for review and feedback by 31st January 2018. The Global Communities Governance Team will continue to monitor and provide need based technical assistance to Districts to enable them bring finality to the plan preparation process.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Global Communities RING M&E Team continued to engage with the USAID Monitoring and Evaluation community of practice (MECOP) on different platforms held within the quarter to learn and share best practices among peer organizations. While engaging with external partners during the quarter, the M&E Team also worked with each of the RING technical units to review the draft data collections tools for the Nutrition and Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana Evaluation led by Evaluate for Health. Additionally, the Global Communities Headquarters is in the final stage of engaging an M&E firm to support the districts and NRCC M&E strengthening strategy. More on each area can be found below.

Participation in USAID partners meetings and learning networks

The Global Communities RING M&E Team participated in the IP meeting for USAID|Ghana's Economic Growth Office and Gender points of contact engagement. The event was organized to guide all IPs on entering data into the FTF monitoring system. There were live demonstrations on data entry, as well as updating archived indicators and writing deviation narratives and comments into the system. Participants were also guided on effective data cleaning, management, analysis and visualization using Microsoft Excel Clinic; this exercise improved participants' skills in basic data analysis and how to use graphics to tell effective stories within reports. As part of the workshop, partners also presented innovative actions to overcome challenges associated with implementing M&E strategies.

The Global Communities RING M&E Team also participated in the 2017 4th quarter MECOP meeting, which was organized by E4H. During the meeting, partners reviewed results of the USAID health office portfolio midline survey and the FY17 data quality assessment, and observed a comprehensive presentation on the supply chain within an M&E system, an experience from USAID Global Health Supply Chain Program-Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM).

RING Mid-Term Evaluation Update

The Global Communities RING M&E Team were also engaged in consultative meetings and document reviews as part of RING mid-term evaluation. The evaluation team leader interacted with numerous technical staff to understand the interventions and the overall implementation strategy of the project, to better inform the evaluation scope. The visit also happened to coincide with one of the G2G transition workshops taking place in North Gonja District, so the Evaluation Team lead and the representative from the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support Services (METSS) project attended the first half of the session, gaining a better understanding of how the funding procedures work, as well as the type of coaching and supervision that Global Communities RING provides as a technical assistance contractor. During discussions, Global Communities RING also provided some insight on interventions of interest, particularly VSLA, OFSP, soybean cultivation, CLTS, nutrition trainings, and district sub-structure strengthening.

As part of their scoping efforts and to prepare for the evaluation, Global Communities RING supplied the team with the following documents: all Global Communities RING-produced quarterly and annual reports since the start of the project, all district work plans since the start of the project, summary notes from project start-up (i.e. community and household selection processes), as well as the RING Operations Manual for Direct Funded Districts, which was produced by USAID and last revised in 2014. The team anticipates returning to Ghana in mid- to late-January to conduct field visits to MMDAs.

Nutrition and Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana Evaluation Update

The quarter also marked the inauguration of the Nutrition and Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana's evaluation steering committee. The committee will oversee the science of the evaluation and support the Evaluation Secretariat at E4H. The study will measure the performance and effectiveness of USAID's current nutrition and poverty reduction programs in an effort to better inform future programming decisions. The targeted programs are RING, SPRING, W4H, and USAID support to LEAP (via collaboration with UNICEF). The data collection tools are under review with Global Communities RING, with plans for data collection to commence in FY18 Q2.

District and NRCC Technical Support

Global Communities RING is in the final stages of hiring an M&E partner to support the M&E strengthening strategy for RING district and regional partners. Once brought on board, the partner (manned by an in-country M&E Specialist and supported through their home office) will begin immediate support to GOG partners via continued capacity building in monitoring and evaluation, record keeping, analysis of data, data utilization for decision making and database installation and management. Core deliverables for the firm, among other things, will be to coordinate with regional offices to streamline any GOG data collection tools for the post-Ghana Shared Growth and Development Strategy II MTDPs and report on their indicators; to conduct a comprehensive M&E capacity assessment of government partners and base coaching and supportive supervision strategies on the gaps identified; and finally, to replicate its District Health Information System (DHIS2) database for the NRCC (along with basic versions for district offices) to enhance their data management capacity and overall ability to provide supporting data for their reported progress against Ghana's development indicators.

Global Communities has currently narrowed the field to two strong contenders and will present their final proposed candidate to USAID for approval in January 2018.

6. Social Behavior Change Communication

In FY18 Q1, the Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Team engaged in a number of supportive efforts to ensure key RING messages are more effective and reach a wider audience. Below is summary of SBCC activities undertaken within the quarter.

RING Media Engagement on 2017 OFSP Implementation and Results

In FY17, Global Communities RING made concentrated efforts to strengthen and consolidate its partnership with local media outlets as a major communication channel for updating the general public and other key stakeholders on relevant SBCC messages. During the first quarter of FY18, Global Communities RING continued this partnership by engaging with eleven media houses (print, television and radio) for a half-day session to share achievements to date and plans for the future within the OFSP intervention. Also in attendance were key stakeholders in the implementation, coordination, and supervision of the OFSP intervention, including MMD Coordinating Directors and Agriculture Directors, RING Agriculture Focal Persons, and representatives from the NRCC, UDS, USAID/Ghana, and Global Communities RING. The theme for the engagement event was *“Improving nutrition in northern Ghana through Orange-fleshed Sweet Potato – celebrating the harvest of over 500 metric tons of OFSP by 15,000 households”*. After a presentation of results to date, along with plans for 2018, the press and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to ask questions to project leadership, as well as seek clarification on the 2018 strategies. To complete the event, Global Communities RING provided a press release with all of the relevant information. Several media outlets covered the event, as captured in the [hyperlinked article](#).

Radio Dissemination of OFSP Harvesting and Utilization Promotional Song

In the first quarter of FY18, Global Communities RING launched radio programming as part of a complementary SBCC effort for education on proper harvesting, storage, and utilization of the OFSP roots. Global Communities RING contracted seven radio stations for a period of eight weeks (October-November 2017) to air the OFSP harvesting and utilization promotional song produced by the project. The seven stations were strategically selected as they cover the geographic area of our 17 partner districts, and conduct programming in the local languages. The strategic timing of the radio shows ensured that the key harvesting, storage, and utilization messages delivered by MMDA staff during community outreaches were reinforced through multiple mediums, a proven SBCC technique.

Coordination on SBCC Material Development and Dissemination

In FY18 Q1, Global Communities RING continued to coordinate closely with other USAID Implementing Partners in the Northern Region, particularly WASH for Health (W4H) and Communicate for Health (C4H), discussing programmatic linkages and progress made on the development of SBCC materials for dissemination and use by project beneficiaries. Global Communities RING also received WASH radio materials from W4H for dissemination to RING districts. The radio materials contained key WASH messages related to sustainable improvements in addressing sanitation issues, including the importance of building, using, and maintaining a household latrine; hand washing with soap under running water before eating and after defecating; and the importance of drinking potable water, including the appropriate treatment and safe storage methods. Global Communities RING will engage selected radio stations to air the jingles for a 12-week period, beginning February 2018.

Documentation of Success Stories & Activity Briefs

During the quarter, Global Communities RING conducted a number of field visits to project sites, examining stories of interest for key interventions. Some of those Success Stories have been captured as appendices to this report. The SBCC Team has also begun coordination with the Governance Team and other technical units to document some of the project's innovative approaches to activity implementation. As part of our FY18 work plan, Global Communities RING intends to draft activity briefs on our Medium Term Development Plan support efforts, as well as our sub-structure strengthening, integrated nutrition outreach, and community sanitation delivery innovations. These drafts are in production and will be shared with the USAID team for their inputs before finalization in the coming quarter.

7. Opportunities, Lessons Learned, and Challenges

As RING implementation is ongoing through Regional and MMDA partners, Global Communities RING continues to take stock of opportunities, lessons learned, and challenges to overcome. This process of continual reflection and adjustment has resulted in improved implementation and monitoring support strategies for data collection. Key examples of lessons learned and challenges across the various technical sectors are detailed below:

- *Rigid adherence to the approved work plans and budgets:* while initially this may seem positive, in the case of many districts and regional departments, it has slowly brought discord among certain officers. Given that RING is a dynamic program that has been able to shift to accommodate emerging developments, oftentimes approved work plans and budgets may need revision and closer scrutiny over time. District and Regional Focal Persons frequently complain that, despite the shift in strategy and the explanations provided, some implementing officers demand adherence to the approved plan and budget when they are requesting funds. During recent engagements with district leadership, many Coordinating Directors claim that some budgets are sometimes a bit high compared to what the technical officer will actually need based on their travel plans; the Directors have reportedly only agreed to lower amounts for certain activities (i.e. community-level trainings and the amount of fuel required for certain communities – some need much less than what is budgeted [though others need far more]). On the surface, this is an excellent practice and one that is encouraged, as Global Communities RING recognizes that budgets made several months in advance are projections at best and should be updated to reflect current and actual needs. However, Global Communities RING is also cognizant that personal agendas may come into play, or have come into play in the past, making some technical officers distrust the motives from leadership for such shifts. This is an area our technical team will keep an eye on as we move forward; ensuring that strategy shifts are clearly communicated to technical officers is key when budgets are reconsidered. Emphasizing to all RING partners that work plans and budgets, despite approval, are subject to further scrutiny before funds are released is equally important.
- *Lack of 'Trickle Down' Funding to Sub-District Level for Health Activity Implementation:* Under the Nutrition Component, there are several activities that cover large numbers of communities or groups, particularly for follow-up visits and monitoring. Given the minimal human resource capacity at the district level that is dedicated to RING implementation (typically relegated to one or a few Nutrition Officers and periodic engagement by the Director of Health Services), it is necessary to engage health staff from the sub-district level to support monitoring at the community level – a task which already falls under their purview. In activities like Technical Support Visits for CHVs, QI Coaching

Visits, Mother to Mother/Father to Father Support Groups, and especially the CHPS Strengthening and Community Outreach, several sub-activities have an element of community outreach and/or monitoring that was envisioned to be carried out by the trained sub-district staff due to the human resource challenge cited above. However, there is a major challenge when it comes to actual implementation and this was noted in FY17 when there was a lag in the implementation of several key activities that require heavy sub-district engagement, particularly the MTMSG group formation and monitoring and QI team follow-ups by the Coaches. Currently, in many districts, the DNO or any other senior member of the DHMT do not frequently delegate these responsibilities to sub-district staff. To better address this challenge, in early 2018, the Global Communities RING will support the Northern Regional Health Department to host a joint forum with DDHSeS, DNOs, In-Charges, and other key sub-district health staff to fully review each district's work plan and budget and ensure all stakeholders are 100% clear on the approaches, strategies, and rationales for all activities and their sub-activities and the resources due to each party. This will likely be held at the zonal level to reduce travel time and time spent away from their posts, but this is a critical activity to ensure the level of timely, quality, and consistent monitoring support required for successful 2018 implementation.

- *Delays in submitting liquidation reports:* delays in liquidation featured prominently in this quarter and several districts experienced challenges in accessing their fourth quarter funds because of it. When Global Communities RING engages with Project Accountants and Focal Persons, the most common reason for the delay in submission to USAID is that the implementing officers fail to report in a timely manner. To combat this ongoing challenge, Global Communities RING will continue to encourage implementing officers to report as they go, rather than waiting until the end of the quarter to collate information from two to three months prior. Additionally, district leadership (programmatic and financial) must enforce policies that prevent technical officers from accessing multiple tranches of funds before they properly reconcile for previous cash received. Stronger communication between the technical and administrative teams is also needed to ensure there is an adequate supply of cash on hand to implement planned activities.
 - Though we have not yet documented it in any scientific manner, the Governance Team has observed from its interactions with Project Accountants that those districts that transitioned from sub-contracted to G2G tend to fare better in this regard. The rigorous level of documentation that was required under the RING subcontracts likely instilled the good habits surrounding the frequent submission of supporting paperwork within the technical officers.
- *Timeliness of monitoring older groups' performance:* as implementation across all sectors continues to scale up, Global Communities RING has noted some monitoring lapses, particularly in older communities with the small ruminant and VSLA interventions ongoing. Going forward, Global Communities RING will be more conscious of the need for districts to strategize early on how they will handle the time and personnel needs required to meet with the numerous older beneficiary communities, groups, and farmers.
- *Strict adherence to procurement and quarantine procedures:* this has improved over time, but some districts, namely Tamale, had a real challenge with this for small ruminants in 2017. Despite strict guidance on how the livestock procurement and intake was supposed to go, the Metro failed to follow this information and had mortalities due to seasonal disease outbreaks that could have been avoided, had the protocols been followed. The Metro has

subsequently begun purchasing replacement animals from their own funds and new political leadership has indicated that these lapses seen in 2017 will not be seen in 2018.

- *Delegation of responsibilities*: this is a recurring issue that has improved within some sectors, but still remains a problem within certain departments, namely Nutrition. Given the scale of nutrition activities and the level of decentralized monitoring required, it is impossible for a single DNO or DDHS to successfully carry out all activities. In districts where there is a frequent backlog of implementation, a lack of delegation of duties is often at the root (across all sectors, not only Nutrition). Global Communities RING will continue to encourage activity focal persons and departmental heads to share responsibilities among co-workers, especially junior staff when it comes to non-critical tasks, as it is empowering to the team and builds internal capacity. WASH and agriculture/livelihoods are examples of areas where technical officers have generally been successful at delegating activities. The sheer scale of agriculture interventions, as well as CLTS and VSLA, and the daily labor required to follow-up to beneficiary communities and households has forced previously reluctant officers to see the benefit in sharing responsibility among their colleagues.
- *Prioritization of critical health staff to be trained*: the prioritization of critical staff for health trainings has been a consistent problem, though has improved in the last quarter with continued emphasis on the correct staff being trained. Previously, especially for large trainings, Global Communities RING would note that, in order to fill the training budget, some health departments would send non-essential staff to the trainings. If there were any delays in notifying the regional technical team of the training, these lapses were sometimes not caught until after the training was conducted. Through vigilant review of the nutrition training tracker and insisting that district staff notify both Global Communities RING and the NRHD of planned trainings in a timely manner, this challenge has gradually been addressed and will continue to improve moving forward.
- *Ensuring proper post-training follow-up and cascading of regional trainings to the district level*: the majority of regional efforts center on capacity building and monitoring, with the occasional larger stakeholder forum. Regional departments have done a good job at holding their planned trainings and conducting general monitoring. However, the next steps of those regional-level trainings are to ensure the remaining district staff are also informed/benefit and that the trained staff are then appropriately monitored and coached to apply the best practices and strategies learned during said regional training. This will be an area of focus in 2018 as regional trainings are reduced and a greater emphasis is placed on quality of monitoring and documentation of efforts as part of the M&E systems strengthening strategy.
- *Relaxation of PFM control measures once they have been certified as completed*: as most districts near 100% completion of their risk mitigation plans, there is the likelihood that the best practices they have demonstrated in the past will taper off. Global Communities RING has incorporated continued PFM reviews into their monitoring plan. Additionally, in FY18, the Governance Team has planned to conduct a PFM Excellence certification process to encourage districts to maintain sound PFM principles. The concept note is in progress for final review with the NRCC and USAID and the Governance Team hopes to quickly pilot the assessment tool in mid-February for full roll out before the close of FY18 Q2. The tool will likely be based on the initial assessment PFM Risk Assessment tool and will focus on the 'next steps' of PFM, ensuring that the issues that had been previously marked as addressed are maintained.

8. Plans and Areas of Emphasis for the Coming Quarter

In the coming quarter, Global Communities RING will continue to build upon successes across all technical component areas and reach scale with core activities. Data gathering and analysis will also be a priority.

Across all technical sectors, the teams will support the districts and the regional departments as they begin implementation of their 2018 annual work plans. This will include no-cost preparation for time-bound activities, taking stock of restricted goods that will require approval before purchase, and ensuring districts begin strategic roll out of all interventions applicable to the dry season. In addition, all technical departments will support MMDAs and the NRCC to effectively close out 2017 operations, including production and submission of technical and financial reports. With these goals in mind, summarized plans for the coming quarter across each technical component are as follows:

8.1. Component One Focal Areas

FY18 Q2 marks the start of a new calendar year and the full onset of the dry season. In addition to supporting districts to finalize their yield results from 2017 harvests, Global Communities RING will provide technical support in a number of timely ventures, such as dry season vegetable gardening, formation and training of the few remaining VSLAs, and provision of technical guidance in the poultry activity. In addition to these specific efforts, the Agriculture and Livelihoods Team will support a number of other efforts, including:

- Facilitate a regional review meeting on VSLA activities for district VSLA staff and other key stakeholders;
- Coordinate with UDS to providing training for AEAs, VSLA teams, CLTS Monitors, lead farmers, and community champions on OFSP vine multiplication, root production and improved storage;
- Coordinate with RAD to train AEAs on nutrition sensitive agriculture with focus on dry season leafy green vegetable production through small scale drip irrigation technology;
- Procure initial start-up supply of 600 VSLA boxes for the expansion and creation of VSLAs in LEAP beneficiary communities;
- Undertake a technical assessment of Chereponi District's 2017 performance and adherence to guidelines in implementing agriculture interventions (small ruminants, soybeans, OFSP) to make recommendations for their 2018 funding for Component 1 activities; and
- Provide technical guidance to MMDAs to complete early documentation and submission of requests to USAID for the procurement approval of restricted goods, such as small ruminants, and soybean and groundnuts seeds.

8.2. Component Two Focal Areas

The coming quarter represents a lull in time-consuming agriculture and livelihoods activities typical for northern Ghana. The Nutrition Team will take full advantage of this seasonal work load shift and focus on the full scale up of MTMSG activities, along with improvements in the quality of monitoring and technical support provided by district health staff. In addition to these focal areas, the Nutrition Team will collaborate with the NRHD and the districts to:

- Disseminate results of the anemia survey with the region and districts;
- Continue the mobile technology for supportive supervision pilot;
- Cover all remaining health facilities in RING partner districts with an OJT in commodity management;
- Strengthen MTMSG activities by supporting MMDA to train all VSLA groups as MTMSGs by the end of the year;
- Support the formation of FTFSGs to complement the activities of the MTMSGs and to strengthen collaboration with departments responsible for VSLAs in making the support groups sustainable after the RING project;
- Provide intensive monitoring and coaching on Anemia, CMAM, and C-IYCF, including continuous onsite mentorship of HWs and CHVs to sharpen their knowledge and skills;
- Support all QI teams to regularly conduct monthly meetings;

- Incorporate discussions of actions taken by households in diversifying their diet after the cooking demonstration mini-durbars to elicit information about potential success stories;
- Undertake community monitoring of advocacy sessions and discussions about potential success stories to be shared with communities; and
- Support discussions in durbars around success stories resulting from caregivers' participation in health durbars and adoption of positive nutrition and health behaviors.

As was the case for FY18 Q1, Q2 represents an ideal time to make significant progress in many seasonal WASH activities. The priority for the quarter will be continued implementation and improvements upon CLTS efforts as the region continues to move forward toward its ODF goal. A number of communities will be triggered via district work plans, Global Communities RING CLTS Monitors, and the Natural Leaders Network. Additionally, provided the availability of district funds, other construction works will continue, such as borehole and livestock watering repairs. Global Communities RING will provide technical assistance to the district and collaborate with the region and other WASH stakeholders in a number of areas, including:

- Provide technical support to MMDAs to trigger new communities under CLTS and effectively roll out the NLN;
- Provide support to CLTS Monitors and Natural Leaders Network agents to engage with CLTS communities and further expand the NLN;
- Support districts, where needed, on other WASH intervention implementation, such as borehole assessments and repairs, institutional latrine repairs, and WSMT trainings and monitoring, among others;
- Reproduction and distribution to districts of W4H Water, Sanitation and Hygiene communication materials;
- Support the region to launch the next ODF League Table and to conduct pre-launch assessments with other RICCS members; and
- Collaborate with the region to strategically carry out the celebration of 300 ODF communities achieved under the project.

8.3. Component Three Focal Areas

Much like the Nutrition Team, the Governance Team will take advantage of the 'slow season' during FY18 Q2 to work with the regional departments on a number of initiatives, such as sub-structure strengthening for sustainability and continued efforts under social protection. There will likely be a lull in 2018 implementation as Implementation Letters had not yet been activated for the G2G districts. However, the team can support the district financial officers to coordinate with their respective technical teams to prepare for liquidation of their 2017 assets. In addition to these specific areas, the Governance Team will:

- Coordinate with the RPCU and key stakeholders in MMDAs on developing and piloting the sub-structure assessment tool;
- Prepare and pilot the PFM Certification of Excellence system for all GOG partners that have achieved 100% ratings in addressing PFM risks;
- Coordinate with USAID to address ongoing findings of the REFMIC;
- Support North Gonja, Gushegu, and Chereponi to close out 2017 subcontracts;
- Coordinate with Chereponi District on the development of their 2018 work plan and subsequent subcontract;
- Engage with UNICEF, USAID, the RDSW and MMDAs, and the Global Communities RING Livelihoods Team on the LEAP/VSLA overlap effort;
- Facilitate the onboarding of the Gender and Social Protection Advisor;

- Support both regional Social Welfare and Gender to develop an integrated monitoring checklist;
- Coordinate with Regional Social Welfare regarding issues noted during district monitoring;
- Continue to support the districts and region in a number of PFM efforts, such as asset management, HCC calculation, and ensure all parties are duly updated on procurement policy changes;
- Coordinate with the Global Communities RING M&E Team for the onboarding of the subcontracted firm in charge of M&E systems strengthening efforts; and
- Coordinate the efforts of all Global Communities RING Technical Teams to support the NRCC in the completion of their 2018 Annual Work Plan.

8.4. Other Focal Areas

In addition to the various technical areas of focus, Global Communities RING provides other cross-cutting support for Communications and M&E. A summary of those plans is captured below.

Key activities for SBCC in FY18 Q2:

Building on progress made in 2017, during the coming quarter, the SBCC Team will continue to engage with other USAID IPs to build on lessons learned and access already-developed materials that can support RING project efforts. Additionally, engagement with external media groups will continue, as harnessing mediums such as airwaves and print journalism, which will allow key project messages to be disseminated much further than Global Communities RING could do on its own. Additional areas of focus can be found below:

- Coordination meetings with other USAID Implementing Partner (IPs) and partners to build synergy, share best practices and to avoid duplication/poor use of resource or implementation;
- Joint project sites visits with selected local communication enterprises to interact with project beneficiaries, and document successes and lessons learned;
- Finalize sub-district signboards with Open Budgets and 2018 work plan targets;
- Radio broadcast of key SBCC WASH materials developed by the W4H Project;
- Printing and dissemination of RING livelihoods activities best practices cards; and
- Support technical teams with the documentation of activity briefs for key interventions.

Key Activities for M&E in FY18 Q2:

In the coming quarter, aside from standard day to day efforts in data collation, cleaning and validation, and input into the RING database, the Global Communities RING M&E Team will focus efforts in FY18 Q2 on supporting the onboarding of the subcontracted firm that will lead the M&E systems strengthening efforts for the region and districts. This support may include facilitating logistics to undertake any planned rapid assessments, engaging with district departments for focus group discussions, and providing any necessary background information on M&E efforts thus far. M&E will coordinate closely with the RING Chief of Party, as well as the Governance Team, the RPCU, and USAID in the roll out of this effort.

9. Annexes

Annex A – Summary of Quarterly Meeting Progress by District Sub-Structures

District	Area Council	# of Meetings Planned	# of Meetings Held	Remarks
Central Gonja	Buipe	4	3	Some challenges noted after the change in political parties - major contention as to who should form the newly-reconstituted Councils. Buipe got back on track quickly, while the remaining Area Councils are still disorganized comparatively.
	Tulliwé	4	1	
	Kosawgu	4	1	
	Mpaha	4	0	
	Yapei	4	0	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	20	5	
Chereponi	Nansoni	4	1	The district delayed in requesting facilitation support for the initial trainings required; their focus was on completing agriculture activities that were included with a late subcontract modification - they plan to hold at least one more meeting in FY18 Q2 as part of their 2017 subcontract extension
	Tambong	4	1	
	Chereponi	4	1	
	Wenchiki	4	1	
	Wonjuga	4	1	
	Tombu	4	1	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	24	6	
East Gonja	Salaga	4	3	District has plans to complete the last meeting if an extension for 2017 funding is granted
	Kpembí	4	3	
	Bunjai	4	3	
	Kulaw	4	3	
	Kpariba	4	3	
	Makango/Kafaba	4	3	
		<i>Sub-total</i>	24	
East Mamprusi	Gbintiri	4	4	Remaining Area Councils were not trained until May and by then, 2 quarters had passed; all activities are on track in all sub-structures now, however.
	Nalerigu	2	2	
	Gambaga	2	2	
	Langbinsi	2	2	
	Sakogu	2	2	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12	12	
Gushegu	Gushegu	4	3	Some meetings began in December, but have yet to be invoiced and reported on; remaining meetings will take place in the coming quarter as a 2017 subcontract extension has been granted
	Zantili	4	3	
	Galwei	4	3	
	Bogu	4	3	
	Kpatinga	4	3	
	Nawuhugu	4	3	
	Yawuhugu	4	3	
	Nabuli	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	32	24	
Karaga	Sakulo	4	2	Area Councils were not trained until midway through the year, reducing their ability to meet during Q1 and Q2 of 2017
	Zandua	4	2	
	Kuduli	4	2	
	Pishigu	4	2	
	Karaga	4	2	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	20	10	
Kpandai	Kpandai Town	4	4	None; completed as planned
	Kumdi	4	4	
	Lonto/Kpajai	4	4	
	Nkanchina/Balai	4	4	
	Ketegeli/Buya	4	4	
	Kanbowule/Ketare	4	4	
	Jambui	4	4	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	28	28	
Kumbungu	Kumbungu	4	3	District has plans to complete the last meeting if an extension for 2017 funding is granted
	Zangballung	4	3	
	Dalun	4	3	

District	Area Council	# of Meetings Planned	# of Meetings Held	Remarks
	Gbullung	4	3	
	Gupanarigu	4	3	
	Voggu	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	24	18	
Nanumba North	Gmantambu	4	4	None; completed as planned
	Kumbo	4	4	
	Darikum	4	4	
	Nabanga	4	4	
	Varibiegu	4	4	
	Kakuhi	4	4	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	24	24	
Nanumba South	Sunkuli	4	3	District was unable to complete four meetings in all Area Councils and proactively realigned the savings before the close of the year
	Bondalikadibu	4	3	
	Dachamba	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12	9	
North Gonja	Daboya	4	3	District will carry the last meeting out in the coming quarter with a 2017 subcontract extension in place
	Lingbinsi	4	3	
	Mankarigu	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12	9	
Saboba	Saboba	0	0	The district prioritized Kpalba as the best Area Council to be sustainably functional and did not include the remaining Councils intentionally; upon further assessment, the Kpalba Councils actually needed more capacity building training and the funds for the meetings were realigned to support a full three-day training, which was co-facilitated by Global Communities RING
	Wapuli	0	0	
	Demong	0	0	
	Kpalba	4	0	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	4	0	
Sagnarigu	Kanvilli	4	3	District has plans to complete the last meeting if an extension for 2017 funding is granted
	Choggu	4	3	
	Kalpohin	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12	9	
Savelugu-Nanton	Savelugu	4	3	District has plans to complete the last meeting if an extension for 2017 funding is granted
	Nanton	4	3	
	Diare	4	3	
	Moglaa	4	3	
	Tampion	4	3	
	Pong-Tamale	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	24	18	
Tamale	Central Sub-Metro	4	3	Funds from the last quarter's meetings were realigned to support larger Citizen's Forums at the same venues
	Western Sub-Metro	4	3	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	8	6	
Tolon	Tolon	4	4	None; completed as planned
	Nyankpala	4	4	
	Tali	4	4	
	Kasuliyili	4	4	
	Lingbunga	4	4	
	Yoggu	4	4	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	24	24	
West Gonja	Damongo	4	3	Compared to Busunu, Larabanga and Damongo are less organized and proactive; the Assembly has requested to realign those meetings' funds if they are granted an extension for 2017 funding
	Busunu	4	4	
	Larabanga	4	2	
	<i>Sub-total</i>	12	9	
Total		316	229	
Completion Rate		72%		

Annex B - Gender Desk Officer Activity Summary

District	Activity	Completion Status	Numbers Reached			Remarks
			F	M	Total	
Central Gonja	Formation and quarterly meetings of Gender Support Networks	completed	6	12	18	An 18 member Gender Support Network (GSN) was formed. The quarterly meetings of the network provided members the platform to discuss pertinent gender issues affecting the DA
	Training of Heads of Departments and other stakeholders on Gender Analysis and Gender Polices	completed	8	18	26	This was for the participants to mainstream gender in their daily activities both at home and workplace.
Chereponi	Training for VSLA Group Leaders on engagement in local governance	not started	-	-	-	The district couldn't start any of the gender activities because of late start of activities in the DA and when activities started the DA prioritized agricultural activities which was time sensitive. The DA did not also have a GDO in The as he was on study leave
	Monitoring to selected communities where Community Sensitization meetings on Gender Mainstreaming was held in 2016	not started	-	-	-	
East Gonja	Gender Model Family(GMF) Sensitization, recruitment and monitoring	completed	75	15	90	The activity was conducted in two communities (Adamupe and Kpolo). The sensitization was attended by 75 females and 15 males. 10 families from each community were recruited into the GMF and monitored. The GMF hold monthly support meetings to discuss to better discuss challenges and support each other. The families have shown remarkable progress in terms of the both men and women doing jobs that were traditionally not done by each of the gender. The main challenge still remains stigma for men who have adopted the model
East Mamprusi	Training on Gender Mainstreaming Lobbying and Advocacy for DA and other Decentralized staff	completed	5	45		50 staff of the EMDA comprising head of departments and key were trained on how to mainstream gender into their departmental plans and activities.
	Sensitization of RING beneficiary Communities on Women participation in decision making	completed	706	1127		The Gender desk officer collaborated with the WIAD officer to target most of the RING beneficiary communities on the sensitization
	Sensitization of RING beneficiary	completed	1012	881		The Gender desk officer collaborated with the WIAD

	Communities on Significance of Women Access, Control and Ownership of Resources					officer to target communities that benefited on RING agricultural and livelihood interventions were sensitized on how to negotiate the power structures within the household to have access to and control over resources especially RING donated resources like small ruminants, agricultural inputs etc.
	Monitoring the activities of women groups in all RING intervening communities by GDO	Completed	916	206		
Gushegu	Sensitization on reducing women time burden	Complete	160	84	244	All the ten communities were sensitized
	Sensitization and formation of Gender Networking Teams at the Area Council Level	Complete	18	15	33	Meeting at three Area Councils ongoing
Karaga	Organize Quarterly Meeting on Gender issues in the District	100% completed	12	28	40	Quarterly meeting of various departments with the DA and other external stakeholders to discuss pertinent gender issues. Key issues that emerged included issues of child marriages, girl child school drop etc.
	Conduct sensitization outreach on gender related issues in RING 2017 beneficiary Communities	100% completed	283	89	372	sensitization conducted in 10 communities on the topics/key issues identified above
Kpandai	The GSN meeting organized	Completed	3	17	20	
Kumbungu	Child protection and women's empowerment	Complete	107	25	132	this was conducted in 5 communities
	Strengthening the family system for sustainable. Development	completed	169	172	339	not budgeted, but implemented through realigned funds
	Time Management and the Culture of Saving	completed	94	137	231	
Nanumba North	Training of 20 DA departmental heads & Staff on gender mainstreaming	Completed	2	18	20	Heads of Departments and other staff were trained on gender mainstreaming.
	Training of ten (10) selected RING beneficiary communities on gender mainstreaming at district level, (3 participants per community)	Completed	30	0	30	Thirty participants from 10 communities participated in this training. They included 3 participants from each community. The training content covered gender analysis, gender roles and its implication on the socio-economic and political

						development of the district. focus group discussions
	Carry out gender based conversation in ten (10) selected RING communities within the district (at the Area Level)	Completed	65	30	90	This activity brought together 95 JHS pupils from 10 selected schools to be educated and sensitized on Gender related issues. The aim of the activity was to assist the pupils to set up Gender clubs in their schools. This will reflect in the way they will handle gender issues both at school and at home. A follow up to the schools indicate that these clubs have been formed
Nanumba South	Sensitization, formation and recruitment to Gender Model Family Activity	ongoing	115	170	285	Sensitization was attended by 285 participants from 3 communities. Between 15-25 families in each of the communities. Ongoing monitoring and supportive visits have been carried out. The adoption of gender biased roles are changing with the communities. An experience sharing meeting was held with the GMFs in each community which gave them the opportunity to discuss lessons and challenges associated with practicing the concept. GMF wives noted the support they now extra-ordinarily receive from their husbands including feeding and cleaning children. Women also help their husbands in cleaning outside the house. Both husbands and wives noted the HH level peace they now enjoy due to the division of HH labor
North Gonja	Gender Mainstreaming Sensitization for Heads of Departments	Completed	2	12	14	About 93.33% was Sensitized. The event was very good
	Sensitize all Assembly members on gender mainstreaming and work load of women, girls and boys	Completed	2	13	15	About 65.22% Sensitized. Outcome was good
	Sensitization of women and men on the local government system and need for gender balance	Yet to be done				No funds
Saboba	Sensitization of RING beneficiary Communities on	completed	94	19	113	this was conducted in 5 communities

	Women participation in decision making					
	Awareness forums on reducing women's and girl child's time burden.	completed	81	18	99	this was conducted in 5 communities
	Sensitization of RING beneficiary Communities on Significance of Women Access, Control and Ownership of Resources	completed	102	25	107	this was conducted in 5 communities
Sagnarigu	Hold 3 public education fora at the 3 area councils on women involvement in decision making on Sanitation and nutrition.	complete	133	187	320	This activity provided opportunity for men and women to discuss common domestic issues
	Hold training programme on conflict management in 5 RING communities.	Complete	4	153	157	This activity has resolved many domestic conflicts
	Use drama for cultural re-orientation on behavioral change in nutrition, Sanitation and child development.	Complete	121	232	353	This activity was greatly appreciated because of it drama nature
	Hold 3 interface meetings for husbands and wives of RING beneficiary women on sustaining the gains made.	Complete	33	44	77	Husbands and wives testify of how domestic peace brings happiness to the family
	GDO Plan Monitoring Visits	Complete	2	79	81	The activity ensured families of regular visits and this would sustain domestic peace.
Savelugu-Nanton	Formation and meeting of Gender Support Network	Completed	21	9	30	A 30 member Gender Support Network (GSN) was formed. The quarterly meetings of the network provided members the platform to discuss pertinent gender issues affecting the DA
	Sensitize women on participation in decision making at the community and household level towards their self-development	Completed	80	19	99	
	Sensitization of Opinion leaders, other Stakeholders and Women on issues of women's access to land and their contribution to family livelihood.	4 Zonal councils (Tampion, Nanton, Pong-Tamale, Diare).	48	72	120	2 ZCs (Moglaa & Savelugu) were not covered. Funds were not released.
	Training of Women on Leadership Positions	Completed	171	9	180	
	Radio Discussion on vulnerability of adolescents and young women to violence and	Completed	NA	NA	NA	On air to the general public

	the abuse of their rights towards improving household economy.					
	Training of Heads of Departments and other stakeholders on Gender Analysis and Gender Polices	Completed	45	15	60	
	Radio Discussion on Early Child Marriage and Child Protection Policy	Completed	NA	NA	NA	On air to the general public
Tolon	To organized a talk show on the involvement of boys and girls in helping their parents with household activities	complete	172	204	376	This was aimed at reducing the domestic time burden of the girl child to make way for more time for learning and play
	Sensitization in five (5) communities on how to eliminate sex –biases in RING House holds	complete	152	127	279	
	To organize 2 day training on decision making for women and men in RING HHs	complete	163	151	314	
Tamale	Sensitization on women's right to leadership and decision making	realigned	14	28	42	Funds were realigned to train 2 representatives each in 14 communities on gender mainstreaming and sensitization
	Radio discussion on the rights to education and economic empowerment	not conducted				
	Capacity building training for GDO(Gender Development Programme)	not conducted				
West Gonja	District Gender Network meeting in the District	Completed	68	32	100	Members contributed in all the agenda tabled.
	Monitoring of Gender Model Family (GMF) activities	Completed	631	208	839	The activity focused on Small Ruminants, Soya, Groundnuts beneficiaries and VSLA groups. They expressed gratitude and appreciation for the intervention.

Annex C – Social Protection Draft Consolidated Reporting Tool (used for FY18 Q1 Reporting)

Social Protection Report – 2017 Activity Summary

Please read the following questions below carefully – note that activities reported on will need to have some type of back-up documentation to verify that it took place. If you need additional space, please attach another sheet of paper and clearly indicate which question the response is related to.

1. Following the workshop in July, did the district re-align their social protection activities from their initial 2017 work plan?

a. If yes, which activities were proposed?

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b. Were these activities successfully carried out? Yes..... No..... (please tick (v)) (if no, include details of outstanding activities)

.....

2. Did the DA hold any **trainings** in 2017? Yes..... No..... (please tick (v)) If yes, please include details below (DSPC, CSPC, poverty graduation, social protection basics for DPCU, etc.)

Date organized	Topics Covered	Community Name/ MMDA Department Benefitting	# of Participants		
			F	M	Total

3. If the **DSPC** was trained, were they able to hold any meetings? Yes..... No..... (please tick (v))

a. If yes, how many meetings were held?

b. What issues have the DSPCs been able to follow-up on? (if DSPC not functional in the district, then skip to #4)

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4. Did the DA form any **CSPCs** in 2017? Yes..... No..... (please tick (v))
If yes, in which communities? (include # of CSPC members/community > Community A – 9,
Community B – 8, etc.)

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5. What issues were the CSPCs able to follow-up on/support?

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6. How many communities and households were **monitored** by the DA in 2017?

Communities:

Households:

- a. What areas of focus did the monitoring visits cover?

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7. How many LEAP beneficiary households had their information updated? (i.e. death of a beneficiary,
secondary beneficiary/alternate recipient documented, etc.)

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8. How many households monitored were supported to address NHIS challenges?
a. What were some of the challenges identified and addressed?

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9. How many household members were supported to register for NHIS? In how many communities?
of Household members:
of Communities:

- a. If disaggregated is available, this is good to include as well (i.e. # of M/F and # of children <5)
NHIS for Males: NHIS for Females: NHIS for CU5:

10. How many households were linked to any other social safety net program (SFP, LIPW, Capitation Grant, VSLAs, etc.)? Include safety net and the # of individuals

- a. Safety Net _____ # of Individuals _____
b. Safety Net _____ # of Individuals _____
c. Safety Net _____ # of Individuals _____

11. Did the DA carry-out any **community forums/durbars/sensitizations**? (may include district departments as well – i.e. consideration of PWDs in development planning) Yes..... No..... (please tick (v))

- a. If yes, how many communities were visits/forums held?

12. What topics were covered?

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13. How many people participated? (gender disaggregation is welcome)

14. Are there any other social protection efforts you undertook in 2017 (i.e. engaged NHIS to obtain additional biometric registration machines)?

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15. Any other social protection-related issues, challenges, improvements in programming made, suggestions that your department would like to share? How can this effort be improve in 2018?

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To the best of my knowledge, this information is correct and I am prepared to support the reported data through hard copy evidence (i.e. attendance sheets, training reports, event reports, etc.).

Name & Signature of Reporting Officer

Date

Position of Reporting Officer

District

Please attach a brief summary of any human interest stories or compelling information that you may have come across during your monitoring.