

2008 ANNUAL PROGRAMME REPORT

PRESENTED BY:

URBAN AGRICULTURE NETWORK-NORTHERN GHANA

SUBMITTED TO:

ACTION AID INTERNATIONAL GHANA-TAMALE

JANUARY 2009

Urban Agriculture Network
Post Office Box 1595TL
Tel: 071-22219
E-mail: urbanetnorthern@yahoo.com

Tamale is one of the fastest growing urban centers in West Africa. The population of Tamale grew by 48.8% between 1984 and 2000 (Population and Housing Census, 2000). In an area where agriculture is the main source of livelihood for majority of the inhabitants, such population increases certainly would have negative consequences on food security situation of the people especially the poor and vulnerable. Over 75% of the 80,000 people living within the Regional Programme coverage area are into agriculture or agric-related activities e.g. Smallholder farmers (crop and vegetable production, livestock and agro-processing) and petty trading forms the majority.

Urbanization has changed the land use pattern from agriculture to residential and industrial uses, crowding out the poor farmers in urban Tamale and fast eroding their rights to access to land, a key productive resource for their means of livelihood. "On the average, cultivated land declines at an annual rate of 7%. Fallowed land on the other hand has been declining at an annual rate of 9.3%. Given this trend, Tamale urban households will exhaust all their fallowed land in ten years and cultivated land in fourteen years if nothing is done." (Urbanet, pg 33, 2006). The need to therefore consider intervening to improve upon access to land by smallholder farmers is crucial.

Another important challenge for the poor and vulnerable in Tamale to improve upon their food security situation has been their inability to work together collectively in a number of fronts including; access to credit, extension delivery, and above all push for policy options that affects them.

Again livestock production (small ruminants, poultry/guinea fowl rearing) serves as alternative livelihood sources of income and food security for the poor and vulnerable in the area. Unfortunately, however, access to veterinary services in the metropolis is a major challenge. For example there are only 4 veterinary field officers providing Veterinary Services in the 132 communities of the Tamale Metropolitan area.

Agro-processing such as shea-butter and rice among others serve as the key sources of livelihood for women and children of urban and peri-urban poor alike. Poor women work from dawn to dusk to process these agro-products to better their lives but are faced with a challenge of marketing these products.

These challenges significantly impact negatively on the ability of the communities to improve upon their food security situations and thus increase their degree of vulnerability to access their rights to food ultimately. UrANet in collaboration with AAG in 2006 through to 2007 have implemented a number of programmes aimed at addressing the issues raised above. These include mobilizing and building capacities of farmer based groups, collaborating with MoFA on veterinary service delivery, support for the demarcation of agricultural zones among others. These programmes have yielded tremendous outcomes but still needs deepening to entrench the gains made and so the programmes for 2008 are largely affected by these issues.

STRATEGIES FOR 2008

The programme of activities for 2008 were largely based on the efforts made and the lessons learnt over the years as indicated in the background in order to consolidate the gains made. The programmes so developed reflected mainly on the following thematic areas; Access to Natural Resources and Agricultural Development, Trade and Extension Service Delivery, and were geared towards achieving the following three partnership objectives:

1. To strengthen the capacity of urban smallholder farmers and processors as well as other agricultural producers living in poverty to realize their right to food
2. To support collective power of farmers and networks of civil society organizations advocating for the right to food
3. To advocate for the integration of urban agriculture and food security into metropolitan management-economic, social and environmental management as well as physical planning

A number of programmes have been undertaken in 2006 and 2007 towards the realization of these partnership objectives. In 2008 in particular the following programmes were jointly agreed upon as a build up to the programmes implemented within the last two years and which still has relevance for continuation and consolidations.

Interventions Embarked Upon in 2008

1. Provide support (fence) to protect and promote vegetable production
2. Research on Urban Cropping Systems and Marketing
3. Dissemination of research findings: publication of findings
4. Collaborate with MoFA on extension delivery (training & strengthening of CLWs)
5. Facilitate access to agric land for smallholder farmers
6. Facilitate farmer group development for collective action
7. Stakeholder meeting on urban agriculture development
8. Facilitate Market Access for Agro-processing
9. International Days of Celebrations

Providing Support to Protect and Promote Vegetable Production (Fencing the Farms)

Vegetable production is one of the major sources of livelihood for the majority of poor and vulnerable groups of people of the Gumbihini community. It has been an old age occupation that continuous to prove its relevance even in the wake of urbanization and its attendance decline of land to residential development. The farmer group over the past year has consistently resisted moves by perpetrators to sell their farmlands for people to develop as residence. UrbANet in collaboration with ActionAid have been part of the struggled to prevent further sale of the farmlands and to preserve it for continuous production. This processes informed the decision to provide a fence for the farmlands that have not yet been encroached to prevent further encroachments.

The intervention was informed by a lot of factors as indicated above and so implementation of the specific tasks involved followed the processes below:

- Preliminary meetings were held with the vegetable farmer group leadership to discuss generally what needs to be done and the responsibility of all stakeholders
- A committee was constituted to take up responsibility for planning and management of the project and to ensure things are done as planned
- The committee was tasked to identify supplies and procure fencing materials for the project
- The committee held a meeting with the Metropolitan Assembly, and Town and Country Planning to discuss about the land and the intension to fence the field.
- The committee mobilized the membership of the farmer group to provide labour on the field for the fencing exercise

Outcome of processes

The intervention has yielded a number of positive outcomes including the following

- The Gumbihini vegetable field covering a total of 4 hectors have been fenced
- The farms have now been protected not only from encroachers, but also from stray animals that feed on the vegetables
- The interactions by the farmer groups during the exercise has strengthened the group

Research on Urban Cropping Systems and Marketing

In recent times stakeholders in urban agriculture particularly NGOs have been advocating for greater support for urban vegetable production as a means of generating employment and income for poor households. Several incentive packages including training, inputs and credit have been offered to farmers in the Tamale metropolis in an attempt to increase farm output and farm revenue. Investigations have revealed that these interventions to a large extent have enabled vegetable farmers in particular to purchase inputs, expand their farms and therefore outputs.

In contrast, prices paid to farmers have been declining and subsequently serving as disincentive to farmers who have been investing enormous amount of resources in the cultivation of vegetables. In order to position itself as an advocate for the promotion of vegetable production in the Tamale metropolis, UrbANet commissioned a study to look at vegetable production: prospects/potentials, challenges and way forward as well as marketing challenges.

The study targeted the Tamale Metropolitan area and the major vegetable producing centers such as Gumbihini, Sagani, Biupela, and Zagyuri.

Processes adopted include:

- Preparation of Terms of Reference (TOR) in consultation with a cross section of key stakeholders such as vegetable farmers, and MoFA
- Identification and selection of a consultant
- Signing of an agreement with the consultant
- Consultant preparation of field instruments
- Consultant and his team conduct pre-testing of the field instruments for validation
- Mobilize vegetable farmer groups for Focus Group Discussions
- Administration of field instruments to target respondents' communities
- Data analysis and presentation of draft report

Outcome of the Processes

The study was successfully conducted and the following results obtained:

- A draft report on the study dubbed 'Urban Cropping Systems and Marketing in Tamale' has been submitted. The report was made to key stakeholders especially MoFA for comments
- A detail final report on the study which incorporated comments of key stakeholders was presented

Dissemination of research findings: publication of findings

Disseminating the final document on the study 'Urban Cropping Systems and Marketing in Tamale' to induce policy, educate and inform various stakeholders including vegetable farmer associations in the Tamale Metropolitan carried out. The dissemination took the form of publication and forums with vegetable producers and marketers at vegetable producing sites; Builpela Dam site, Gumbihini vegetable farms, Sagani Vegetable farm and Zagyuri vegetable farm.

Processes adapted

- Consultant prepares draft documents for publications
- Consultant agrees with publishing agency
- Scheduled programme with and mobilize farmers for dissemination on farms
- Dissemination sessions were organized in four different vegetable producing locations in Tamale (Gumbihini, Builpela, Sagani and Zagyuri) with a total of 104 (75 men and 29 women) producers and marketers took part in the forums

Collaborate with MoFA on extension delivery (training & strengthening of CLWs)

Livestock production particularly small ruminants, poultry and guinea fowl production is gaining prominence among smallholder farmers, men and women alike in the programme area and especially that land for crop production is becoming critical. Unfortunately, however, mortality rates of livestock keeps increasing and the little investments made by poor farmers as the alternative source of income to crop farming often goes down the drains. The veterinary services unit of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has the responsibility of providing technical support in terms of livestock management to farmers. This however, is not the case because; the Tamale Metropolitan Agriculture Development Unit (MADU) has only four (4) veterinary officers manning the entire 132 communities. The magnitude of the problem was extensively discussed at a stakeholder meeting of farmers and MoFA and a resolution was reached to train Community Animal Health Workers from the communities to serve as backstopping in the management of livestock. MoFA has since trained 25 people; the Presby Farmers Organization has also supported MoFA to train 5 while URBANET supported the training of 10 from DA 4 and DA 5 communities.

The number of the CLWs came to a total of 40 (26 male and 14 female). The need to upgrade the skills of these practitioners by way of refresher became necessary and thus a refresher course was organized for the trainees.

PROCESS

- a. Two preparatory meetings with the Veterinary Unit of the Metropolitan Agric Development Unit (MADU) on refresher training and upgrading for Community Livestock Workers (CLWs) was held
- b. MADU through extension officers mobilized CLWs for the training
- c. Logistics were mobilized and MADU organized a refresher training
- d. Two communities were mobilized for field visit to test the skills of trainees

Outcome of the processes

- a. A three day refresher training on basic management of livestock was held
- b. 36 (4 female and 32 male) CLWs have had their skills upgraded
- c. 400 small ruminants (sheep and goats) were vaccinated in the process of the demonstrations on the field test
- d. CLWs are providing first aid services to farmers
- e. The veterinary services unit of MoFA are well informed about status of livestock in the communities through monthly reports produced by CLWs

Facilitating Access to agricultural lands for smallholder farming

In recognition of the fact that farmland is steadily declining in Tamale due largely to urbanization (URBANET, 2006, unpublished) and the impact of it on food security especially among smallholder farmers, *URBANET* started a programme in 2007; demarcation of agricultural zones especially in areas where land is still not taken over completely by residential and industrial development. Three pilot communities Wayamba; Chanshegu and Katariga successfully demarcated a total of 186 acres of land as agricultural zones. The process could however, not be completed. The said demarcated lands needed to be registered with the department of Lands Commission to ensure that those lands are duly registered in the name of the communities as agric zones to protect them from encroachment in future.

Processes engaged in

- a. Held preparatory meetings with key stakeholders (Lands Commission, Metropolitan Assembly, Town and Country Department, Survey Department, and representatives of community chiefs)
- b. Tasked the Town and Country Department to organize a 2 day sensitization meeting with land administrators
- c. Engaged with planning authorities to facilitate the registration of the demarcated lands during the sensitization meetings
- d. Organize radio discussions to reach out to the general public

Outcome of the processes

- a. A two day sensitization forum of land administrators was held with a total of 18 (14 male and 4 female) participants in attendance
- b. Land administrators have been sensitized to create and maintained spaces the development of urban agriculture
- c. The three pilot communities have been duly registered as agric zones and can only now be used for purposes of agriculture development

Facilitating Farmer Group/Association Development and Networking for collective action

A lot of efforts have been channelled towards mobilizing and organizing smallholder farmers and agro-processors especially on livelihood basis (e.g. Crop farmers, livestock farmers, shear butter and rice processors) to take advantage of the strength in numbers to gain access to credit support; extension delivery and above all for collective power to influence policy in the long run. Even though 21 farmer groups were mobilized a lot of the farmers were still not reached out to. The efforts thus still continued this year to mobilized as many groups as possible to build a kind of network that would champion the course of farmers

Processes engaged in

- Preliminary visits were made to 14 communities to identify and interact with farmers and community opinion leaders
- Conduct investigations to identify existing but non active farmer groups in these communities
- Identify a resource person to support in the animation of identified groups
- Mobilized and scheduled discussion sessions with identified groups in communities
- Conduct community meetings to share the idea of working together in groups as farmers and or agro-processors

Outcome of the Processes

- 14 farmer and agro-processing groups were mobilized during the year
- 14 farmer and agro-processing groups have been animated and supported to develop basic group norms and are now actively working together
- All the 14 groups are now holding regular meetings in their communities as one of the key resolutions they made during the animation sessions.

3 Facilitating Market Access for Shear-butter processing

Shear butter processing is one of the major sources of employment and means of livelihood for the majority of women especially in the peri-urban communities of the Tamale Metropolis and in many of our interactions with women and the Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) in particular lack of markets for their produce is very glaring. This affects not only their ability to increase their income and to improve upon their conditions but also serves as a threat to honouring their credit obligations if they do borrow money to enter into the venture. In an attempt to addressing these, UrbANet collaborated with National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) provided skill training on quality shea-butter processing as a key strategy to unlocking marketing opportunities for the groups.

Processes Engage in

- Agreed with NBSSI to provide training
- Mobilized processing groups for the training
- Provide logistics for the training
- Arranged for exposure visit during the training to already well-established processing groups developed by NBSSI

Outcome of the processes

- 5 day skill training organized for two shea-butter processing groups

- 58 women representing the two shea-butter processing groups trained on quality shea-butter processing
- The two groups have been registered with NBSSI as shea-butter processing associations



Support women groups with grinding mills

Poverty, gender discrimination and economic disempowerment is central to the woes of women and girls and the need to integrate economic empowerment programming as a key strategy to the generality of women's rights programming cannot be over emphasized. It has been noted by several empirical studies that women make significant contributions not only to food production in Ghana but also to the upkeep of the Ghanaian household. Close to 70% of the labour force in agriculture in Ghana are women especially in the area of processing and marketing (GPRSP 2002).

Interactions with women groups through regular monitoring visits, observations among others clearly shows the efforts women shea-butter and rice processors have been making to expand their businesses and the limitations they faced as a result of inadequate processing machines/mills. As part of efforts to facilitate women economic empowerment through shea-butter and rice processing, two women groups (Rice and Shea-butter) processing groups were supported with processing machines.

Process undertaken

- Organize preparatory meetings with women group leadership in **Vittin community** (DA3)
- Organize general meeting with entire membership of the women group

- Facilitate the formation of planning and implementation committee by the women group
- Committee consults community opinion leaders and sought support for the project
- Agreed with contractor to construct and installed the machines
- Introduce contractor to women groups
- Monitor works on site

Results so far achieved

- Two meetings were held with the women groups with a total of 52 and 59 women in attendance on the first and second meetings respectively in the Vittin community
- A seven member committee mainly of the women group was put in place for management the processes
- The committee was granted a piece of land by the community to put the processing plant
- The processing center have been build with shea-butter and rice processing machines installed for the women groups



Preparatory meetings with women groups on processing centre



Seven Member Management committee on processing centre inaugurated

Organize a Stakeholder Conference/Meeting on urban agriculture development

One of the key strategic objectives of URBANET and the partnership for that matter is to ensure the recognition and integration of urban agriculture into the planning scheme of the Metropolis. The recognition of urban agriculture in terms of legislation (bye-laws), policy framework to provide an environment that gives a great deal of opportunity for urban agriculture to thrive to feed the urban poor farmer without compromising the health of others. In particular, vegetable production and livestock rearing (small ruminants and poultry) is undoubtedly one of the phenomenons that can uplift the poor from hunger in urban Tamale.

These cannot be achieved without some kind of concerted effort and thus stakeholder meeting/conference will make a great deal of difference in this direction. The process has already been started and what is required is to build up what has been done already. Urbanet has established an appreciable level of degree of rapour with major stakeholders such as the Metropolitan Assembly, MoFA, Town and Country Planning, University for Development Studies, Environmental Protection Agency, among others. Find attached appendix 1 report on stakeholder meetings

Provision of Micro-Credit to Livelihood Groups for Development

The provision of small loans to livelihoods groups (agro-processing, vegetable farmer) was started in November 2007. An amount of forty seven thousand one hundred Ghana cedis (GH¢47,100) was disbursed to a total of eighteen (18) livelihood groups made up of four hundred and sixty eight (468) members. On the 27th October, 2008 an additional fifty six thousand five hundred and twenty Ghana cedi (GH¢56,520) was added to the initial portfolio upon review of what happened in the first phase of the project to reach out to more groups and communities. As it stands now, the scheme has a portfolio of One hundred and eight thousand four hundred and three Ghana cedis (GH¢108,403), with a total of thirty three livelihood groups and a client based of eight hundred and sixty eight (Female 780 and 88) individual beneficiaries.

Basic Requirements for Participation

The requirements for participation in the project would include:

- Livelihood groups who operates a bank account, demonstrates commitments in terms of regular meetings as well as laws governing their operations and are located within DA3 and DA4
- Each livelihood group should have a membership ranging from a minimum of 6 persons to a maximum of 30 persons
- Lending to groups is done through the group accounts to individual group members.
- The groups upon discussions with the credit office submits a request detailing out: names of individual members, livelihood activity engage in and the amount required

- The project team would then process the requests of each group and transfer the money into the groups account for disbursement to their members on the basis of the request submitted by the group.

Outcomes so far

- 868 individuals have had access to micro-credit to improve upon their businesses and livelihoods
- Income levels of beneficiaries are gradually improving

Participation on International Days of Celebrations

This year's international days of celebrations took place in the northern region, Tamale specifically. It was organized by FoodSPAN. Three key events undertaken to were marked celebrated:

1. International Rural Women's Day Celebrations
2. World Food Day Celebrations
3. Hunger Free Day

In order to mark these days' three different foras were organized in Tamale by FoodSPAN: Rural Women's Forum Day at Sankpagla community; Sensitization Forum at GNAT HALL in Tamale; and Students Forum at University for Development Studies Campus in Nyankpala. In all these events UrbANet played a lead role in the mobilization of the evens.

Processes undertaken

- Three preparatory meetings were held at the conference hall of ActionAid, Tamale to plan for the events
- Two committees were formed to facilitate event mobilization: protocol committee, and transport and logistics committee
- Resources persons were identified and committees tasked to discuss and scheduled with them for the events
- Farmer groups, rural women and students were mobilized to participate actively in the events

The institutions that participated in the events organization include:

- UrbANet
- Rice coalition of Northern region
- Grameen Ghana
- ActionAid, Tamale and Yendi
- GAWU, northern region
- FONG Ghana

However, UrbANet played a lead role in the mobilization of all the three events

Outcome of the processes

- The rural women's day celebration was successfully organized with a total number of 350 people participating in the event
- The world food day celebrations registered the participation of 260 (180 male and 80 female) participants stakeholders; farmers, MoFA, EPA, WFP and the general public
- The participants were sensitized on the themes of the celebrations: through presentations by resource persons from the UDS
- 250 seedlings of mangos and moringa were planted during the rural women's day celebrations



Pictures Showing Rural Women's Day Celebrations



Cross section of participants at the World Food Day Forum in Tamale



Presentation by a resources person. Food Rights Coordinator Interacts with MoFA

Challenges

The programme implementation during the year was not without some challenges. These challenges include:

- The level of illiteracy amongst the target communities poses a great deal of challenge to the quest for self initiative and in particular active participation. This also affects their quest for self initiative and assertiveness and so the tendency to show fear, lack of confidence seen to be very high especially on the issues of challenging local authorities on the sale of lands.
- Generally, there is an appreciable level of fatigue amongst communities resulting from a great deal of interactions by so many development actors especially on issues that takes longer periods to bear fruits relative to their pressing basic needs.
- A number of unplanned activities of AAIG during the year significantly distorted timely implementation of programme activities in the communities
- Attitude of development partners and major stakeholders towards participation on programmes is a bit challenging. Most stakeholders pay little attention or time towards collaborations and so often do not attend programmes and that sometimes defeat the purpose of good programmes and or leads in some cases to duplications of efforts.
- Inadequate capacity of the organization in terms of:
 1. skills and time to develop marketable proposals to increase support to communities,
 2. engaging a more skilled and motivated staff for programme implementation
- Again data/information management in terms of documentation and effectively communicating relevant information is a major challenge to the Urbanet secretariat. The need to build the skills of staff on report writing cannot be overemphasized. There is also need to develop a monitoring framework that will clearly and simply indicate benchmarks for easy collection of data and reporting.
- The metropolitan assembly that is a major stakeholder in the transformational process of urban agriculture especially regarding its integration into planning processes is yet to have full grapes of the benefit to the assembly and the population and so its commitment to processes. Related to this challenge is the general perception by a section of the public of urban agriculture as a strange phenomenon. “Agriculture in urban areas!!!!” often exclaimed by people when mention is made of urban agriculture.

Lessons Learnt

A number of lessons including the following were learnt during the year:

- The communities can be very assertive when there are rallied around issues of importance to their livelihoods. This was clearly demonstrated by a group of vegetable farmers when therefore confronted to vacate their land for demarcations for residence. This is an important lesson for us in our quest for ensuring farmers collective action for their rights.
- Planning needs to take a lot of factors known and known into consideration especially in a rain fed dependant agriculture.
- Creating dialogue platforms for the right stakeholders to discuss issues though slows down decisions, the issues agreed upon eventually yields great benefits.

- Another great lesson learnt is that community level consultations with the relevant community structures increase commitment to community level participation.
- We learnt also that inadequate access or flow of information on new technologies increases poor and illiterate farmers resistance and willingness to accept and adapt new farming technologies.
- Mobilizing and sustaining farmer based groups/association except for a specific development intervention has always been a challenge. We learnt from this project that communities/farmer groups will easily be mobilized and become very assertive on issues that directly affect their livelihood. Therefore building farmer based groups around common issues of interest such as marketing problems, land and extension.

Conclusions

The year 2008 have been very challenging, but exciting. It has been a year of great achievement in a number of respects. Building strong farmer based groups/associations is fundamental to the realization of the right of farmers in a number of fronts particularly on policy dialogue and so the mobilization of agro-based groups and the subsequent building of their capacity on group dynamics and leadership skills lays a great foundation towards the realization of their rights through collective action.

APPENDIX 1

STAKEHOLDER SENSITIZATION FORUM ON THE GHANA SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

Introduction

In line with the international agreements on Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals and other regional and national agreements, the government of Ghana launched a national school feeding programme dubbed: Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). The GSFP is an initiative under the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and seeks to improve food security, access to education and reduce hunger and malnutrition (and in this way improve health). Through the feeding of children in kindergarten and primary

schools, the government expects to set up structures and strategies that will ensure the improvement of national food security. The feeding of school children is seen as a starting point to increase agricultural production and efficiency. The GSFP specifically seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Reduce Hunger and Malnutrition
2. Increase School Enrolment, Attendance and Retention
3. Boost Domestic Food Production

Even though the programme is aimed at achieving the above three objectives, efforts so far are rather geared towards the first two objectives (reduction in hunger and malnutrition and school enrolment and retention). There have been claims of improvement in the enrolment of children in schools. Claims have also been made regarding improvements in nutrition among children in schools benefiting from the GSFPs. Several groups have tried by way of studies and monitoring to examine the progress of work/achievement in relation to the general objectives set out by the programme. In general terms, the observations have been that some improvements have been made since the start of the programme especially in the area of increasing school enrolment and to some extent improvement in nutrition. The third component aimed at promoting small scale agriculture production which is envisaged to bring about sustainability of the programme is seriously lacking behind. Various reasons have been assigned for this situation. These include; non availability of foodstuffs to purchase in the local communities benefiting from the GSFP, lack of awareness among beneficial communities especially farmers about the opportunities on the offering, inadequate involvement of key stakeholders in the processes among others.

The GSFP has put in place structures to ensure effective implementation of the programme. The District Implementation Committee (DIC) responsible for the overall management and coordination of the activities of all the schools within the district benefiting from the programme with its membership drawn from different sectors including the district assemblies, MoFA, MOE, MOH among others. The School Implementation Committee (SIC), a community base committee responsible for the management of each school in a particular locality with members drawn from the locality including the head teacher as the chair, the community chief representative, community opinion leader, among others. This broad based team constituted to manage the programme was to ensure that all the components of the programme are implemented effectively. The need to bring on board the programme all the relevant stakeholders cannot therefore be overemphasized. Hence the programme dubbed: Stakeholder Sensitization Forum on the School Feeding Programme.

Objectives of the forum:

The aim of the sensitization forum was to increase awareness among all the critical stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities for the effective implementation of the programme. Specifically the forum aimed:

1. Increase awareness among farmer groups on the opportunities the programme offers to increase their production and access to market
2. To create a platform for establishment of linkage among farmers in the districts and the management structures of the SFP
3. To increase participation of all critical stakeholders in the programme

The Forum

This was a one day forum organized in collaboration with the Metropolitan Agric Development Unit of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly on the 26th November, 2008 at the Christian Council Guest House in Tamale.

Participants

The participants to the forum were drawn from ten (10) schools benefiting from the SFP from three districts in the northern region; 6 schools from Tamale Metropolis, 2 each schools from Savelugu/Nanton and Tolon/Kumbungu districts. The participants were mainly, representatives of farmer groups, representatives of the SIC and DIC, SMCs/PTAs associations, MoFA and community development chairpersons (chairmen and magazias)

Methodology Adopted

The forum generally was an open discussion with a resource person providing guidance. The forum kicked started with open prayer by a participant and followed by a resource person doing a brief presentation by way of knowledge/information sharing. The presentation was broken down into the following smaller units:

- Why GSFP policy
- Implementation structures,
- Who should be involved and at what time
- Linkages in particular of the programme to agriculture production as the main focus
- The achievements and bottlenecks so far- sharing the experience of an inventory exercise on the GSFP in the northern initiated by SNV and other partners

The presentation generated a lot of interest and specked off deeper discussions which further deepened the participants understanding of the GSFP.

Immediate Outputs of Forum

The forum envisaged a number of outputs that reflects on the objectives of forum stated above. In summary the following were achieved at the end of the forum:

1. 25 (9 female and 16 male) participants were sensitized on the Ghana School Feeding Programme
2. 8 participants out of the 25 represented farmer associations/groups whose membership averaged 18 per associations sensitized on the opportunities the GSFP offers them. This message will directly and indirectly an average 144 farmers in the three districts.
3. Community opinion leaders represented at the forum indicate the level of understanding has increased and will positively affect the programmes in their schools
4. All the stakeholders in attendance acknowledged the need to share information about the programme as was discussed and indicated the forum was an eye opener and an opportunity to create collaboration and linkages.

Challenges and Lessons learnt

- The time within which the programme was organized was very limited and participants came not adequately prepared to engage in very constructive discussions as envisaged.
- The resources constrain also limited the number of participants to the forum and that will limit the spread of the impact
- The appreciation of participants of the relevant of the forum to bringing about efficiency in the programme implementation spoke volumes of the essence of the forum and so the need for replication of such in other areas.
- People who are suppose to be direct beneficiaries of the programme i.e. farmers demonstrated little or no knowledge about workings of the programme. To the extent that boosting domestic food production is a key strategic objectives show that a lot of work needs to be done in area of sensitization among farmer associations/groups.