

COASTAL SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES PROJECT (CSLP)

Stakeholder Engagement, Collaborations and Partnerships



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Cover photos:

Top: *Regional Director of Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (middle) contributing at a CSLP facilitated Regional Stakeholder Meeting.* **Bottom:** *Ellembelle District Education Director delivering a message at CSLP meeting.* Photos credit: Richard Adupong, CSLP.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	iii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	iv
1. Background and Introduction.....	1
2. Methodology	2
2.1. Stakeholder Identification	2
2.2. CSLP Activities in Medium Term Development Plans	3
2.3. Joint Planning & Review Workshops with Stakeholders	3
2.3.1. Regional Stakeholders Update Meetings with GoG Institutions from the Western Regional Coordinating Council.....	3
2.3.2. District Stakeholders Meetings with GoG Institutions	5
2.3.3. Meetings with Traditional Authorities	7
2.4. Joint Field Monitoring with Stakeholders (Media Day)	8
3. Collaboration with Government of Ghana Institutions	10
4. Collaborations with Donor-Funded Projects.....	10
4.1. Collaborations with USAID-Funded Projects.....	10
4.2. Collaboration with non-USAID Funded Projects	11
5. Findings, Lessons Learned and Discussions	12
6. Conclusion and Recommendations	14

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1: Map of CSLP intervention communities</i>	2
<i>Figure 2: DoFA Regional Director (extreme left) making a suggestion at CSLP regional meeting</i>	5
<i>Figure 3: Staff of Shama District BAC making a presentation at a CSLP District Meeting</i>	6
<i>Figure 4: CSLP Meeting with District GoG Institutions</i>	6
<i>Figure 5: Traditional leaders at a CSLP bi-annual meeting</i>	8
<i>Figure 6: CSLP female champion Gladys Atsu addressing the media during media day in her community</i>	9
<i>Figure 7: Asonti school kids with GoG stakeholders and the media during a media day</i>	10
<i>Figure 8: CSLP & WA BiCC team at tree nursery site of CSLP female farmer, Mrs. Yaa Sekyiwaa</i>	11

List of Tables

<i>Table 1: Levels of Stakeholders</i>	2
<i>Table 2: Key CSLP Intervention Areas and Partners</i>	3
<i>Table 3: Some Remarks by Western Region Minister at CSLP's Meetings</i>	4

Acronyms and Abbreviations

BAC	Business Advisory Center
CBO	Community Based Organization
CC	Climate Change
CCC	Climate Change Club
CREMA	Community Resources Management Association
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSLP	Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project
DA	District Assembly/ies
DoFA	Department of Food and Agriculture
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FC	Forestry Commission
FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration
FSD	Forest Services Division (of the Forestry Commission)
GES	Ghana Education Service
GoG	Government of Ghana
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
JHS	Junior High School
LUSPA	Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority
M/A	Municipal Assembly
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NBSSI	National Board for Small Scale Industries
RING	Resiliency in Northern Ghana
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
SHS	Senior High School
STMA	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFS	United States Forest Service
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WA BiCC	West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Project
WD	Wildlife Division
WR	Western Region

1. Background and Introduction

The Ghana Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP) is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Feed the Future initiative and a U.S. Forest Service-managed intervention being implemented in the six coastal districts¹ of Ghana's Western Region. The project, originally a three-year project (2013-2016) funded with USAID Climate Change monies, was extended initially for another three years through September 2019² with Feed the Future funding, based on successes achieved within the initial phase. It worked to promote low emissions development in Ghana's Western Region by strengthening community-based natural resource management and monitoring, and improving livelihoods in farming and fishing communities.

The project's second phase, under the U.S. government's Feed the Future Initiative, had a specific objective to reduce poverty and increase resiliency in the target communities through improved natural resource management, livelihood diversification, value chain development, and ecosystem conservation and restoration. The project interventions covered 43 core coastal communities with smallholder farmers and fisher folks as the main beneficiaries. In total, project actions of one sort or another had reached more than 82 communities as of early June 2018.

The interventions of the CSLP were guided by two main outcomes: (i) increased incomes from livelihood diversification and, (ii) improved environment and natural resource management. Specific activities included agroforestry and forestry best practices, short- and medium-term livelihood improvement activities (e.g. beekeeping, climate smart agricultural, CSA, vegetable production), on-farm tree planting of commercial and agroforestry species and management of greening areas / urban greeneries. Others included wetland/mangrove conservation, spatial planning, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and youth engagement (via formation of environmental clubs in public schools).

The CSLP used in-field consultations, targeted trainings, strategic capacity building, detailed technical assistance, and participation in institutional/policy level discussions and workshops based on field-level experience to achieve project objectives.

¹ Shama, STMA, Ahanta West, Nzema East, Ellembelle and Jomoro Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (MMDAs)

² This was subsequently reduced to only two years, to September 2018, due to lack of financial resources in USAID/Ghana's budget

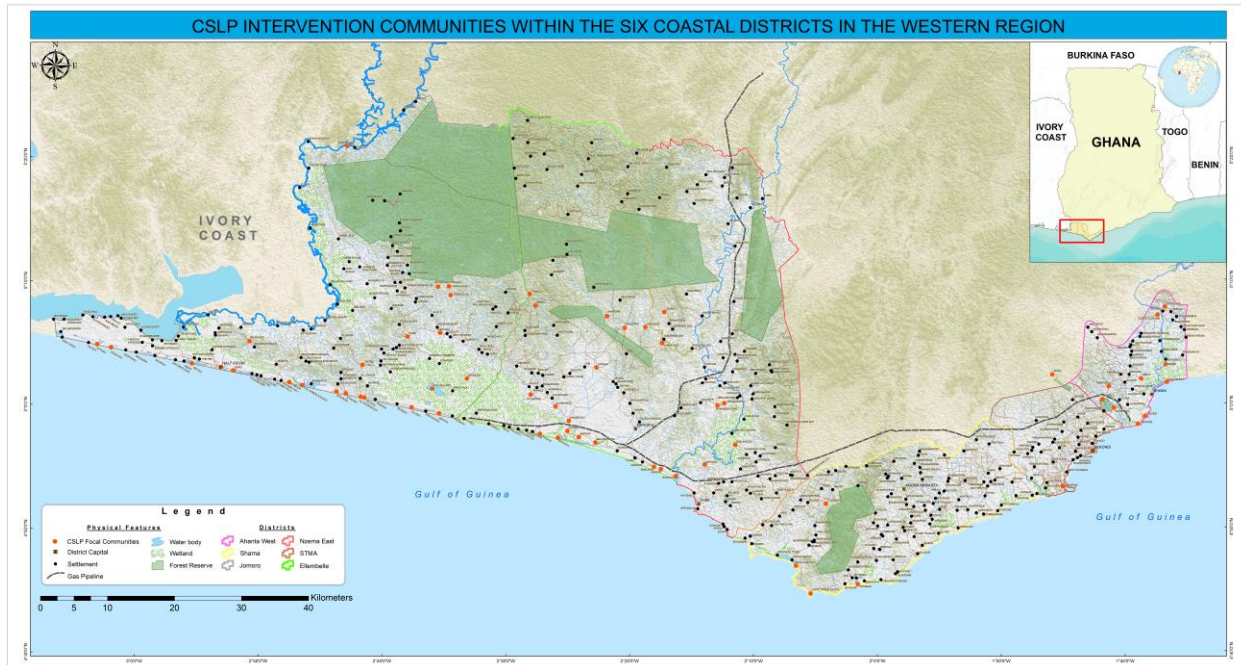


Figure 1: Map of CSLP intervention communities

2. Methodology

2.1. Stakeholder Identification

As part of its communications strategy, the CSLP, right from the inception, identified critical government and non-government institutions as important stakeholders and actively involved them in all aspects of the project; from planning to implementation and review. Stakeholders identified were classified into three main groups as shown in Table 1, and appropriate communication channels were employed to effectively engage the various groups. Per the project design and implementation, it was evident that majority of the key stakeholders were at the Regional and Community/District Levels (grassroots level).

Table 1: Levels of Stakeholders.

Target Audience	Description
Community & District level	Local community members, District level state and non-state institutions; Chiefs/Traditional authorities, Faith & Farmer-based Organizations, Local Schools etc
Regional Level	Regional level state and non-state institutions including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOs, Media etc
National & International level	National level state and non-state agencies including Donors, Potential Donors, International Organizations, Coalitions, CSOs and Media etc.

Key Government of Ghana (GoG) institutions engaged by the CSLP included the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Forestry Commission's (FC) Wildlife Division (WD) and the Forest Services Division (FSD), Department of Food and Agriculture (DoFA), Ghana Education Service (GES), Land

Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA), National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) and the Economic Development Planning Department which all fit under their parent organization being the Western Region Coordinating Council (WRCC). The specific collaboration area with each of the GoG institutions is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Key CSLP Intervention Areas and Partners

#	Key Intervention Area	GoG Partner(s)
1.	Village Savings and Loan Associations-VSLAs	NBSSI
2.	Agroforestry and forestry practices	FC-FSD, COCOBOD
3.	Beekeeping	DoFA
4.	CSA vegetable production	DoFA
5.	Spatial planning	LUSPA
6.	Youth engagement	GES
7.	Wetland/mangrove management	FC-WD
8.	Awareness Creation	GES, EPA, WD

2.2. CSLP Activities in Medium Term Development Plans

In Ghana, each MMDAs is guided by a four-year development plan. The CSLP from the onset took interest in that and worked with the various assemblies, particularly the economic development planning unit to ensure the activities of the CSLP were integrated in their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs). This brought a great sense of ownership of the project interventions to the local central government authorities and made it easy to collaborate and create partnerships with departments and institutions and also pave way for project sustainability. As such, they closely tracked project activities, jointly monitored progress (or otherwise) and reported appropriately.

2.3. Joint Planning & Review Workshops with Stakeholders

Over the 4-year project implementation period, the CSLP adopted a number of approaches to engage its stakeholders and keep them abreast with progress on project activities. Approaches used included quarterly Regional Stakeholder and MMDAs update meetings, Bi-annual Traditional Authorities update meetings and Media day events. These meetings created opportunities for stakeholders to be briefed first-hand on activities implemented on a regular basis. In addition, it offered stakeholders the opportunity to make useful contributions on how to successfully achieve project goals.

2.3.1. Regional Stakeholders Update Meetings with GoG Institutions from the Western Regional Coordinating Council

This regional platform was established by the CSLP to plan and review project activities with all key GoG institutions. Meetings were held on a quarterly basis and were well patronized by most

stakeholders. In all, sixteen meetings were held over the four-year period of project implementation. The meetings, chaired by the WRCC, created the opportunity for the regional officers to receive updates of CSLP implementation while provided useful advice and suggestions to support CSLP implementation. It also created the opportunity for the identification of areas of collaboration and support for CSLP such as trainings for community members. The cordial relationship that existed between CSLP and its partner government institutions led to the regional managers encouraging their subordinate staff in the districts to provide all the needed support to CSLP. Most regional managers of the various GoG institutions participated in trainings and other hands-on coaching and mentoring activities organized by the CSLP in the local communities and offered their technical advice, guidance and directions. Support from the WRCC who offered their benediction in various forms to the CSLP spurred the project team to overcome all challenges.

The occasional presence of the regional stakeholders in some local communities which was indicative of CSLP having full backing, support and commitment from the Government of Ghana further strengthened community members’ belief and appreciation for CSLP’s interventions. Most of the regional managers offered great commendations about the CSLP based on their experience with the project, their own field verifications of project interventions and reports from their district officials. One of such remarks from the head of the region is noted in Table 3.

Table 3: Some Remarks by Western Region Minister at CSLP's Meetings

REMARKS BY HON. WESTERN REGIONAL MINISTER AT SOME OF CSLP's QUARTERLY REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING

...The WRCC is proud to be part of the efforts and interventions by the CSLP on climate change mitigation and adaptation that has gone a long way to complement the District Medium Term Development Plan and other national processes that currently address climate change. I wish to also use this opportunity to commend the CSLP for undertaking activities such as proving technical assistance, creating public awareness, coordinating and building capacity of Government of Ghana (GoG) institutions, farmers groups and Civil Society Organization (CSOs) and improving livelihoods through natural resource management such as mangrove enrichment, beekeeping and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). —December 2015.

...Pray that the Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project will be recognized by other donors to bring more sponsorship to enable it to enroll more programmes thereby, increasing the number of beneficiary districts and if possible include all the twenty-two (22) MMDAs in the Western Region on the program—March, 2016



Figure 2: DoFA Regional Director (extreme left) contributing to discussions during a CSLP regional update meeting

2.3.2. District Stakeholders Meetings with GoG Institutions

At the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly (MMDA) level, stakeholder review and planning meetings were also held on a quarterly basis and were similar to those held at the regional level. It involved almost all departments at the MMDA level. These included the Development Planning Unit, Ghana Education Service, Department of Food and Agriculture, Community Development and Department of Social Welfare, Business Advisory Center (BAC) of the NBSSI and the Physical Planning Department of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority.

Stakeholder meetings at the district level evolved in three phases. During the early stages of project implementation, the CSLP used district-specific engagements to interact with stakeholders. With time, this was reduced to two meetings at the end of every quarter. This was achieved by dividing the six districts into two and holding two meetings at the end of each quarter. With time, the project created a multi-district stakeholder platform for stakeholders from all six districts to meet at one venue. This allowed for broader sharing of ideas and information, networking and greater collaboration. Initially, presentations were done by only CSLP who shared a review of its activities and solicited for inputs from stakeholders present at the meeting. However, based on lessons learned, it was decided that at each meeting, apart from the presentation by the CSLP of implemented activities as well as upcoming activities, one institution will have their officers from the five assemblies do similar presentations. This

was done and welcomed with great commendations. A total of ten (10) joint planning and review meetings were held with all the assemblies except STMA. On the average, 35 district government officials attend such meetings. The approach created a sort of friendly competition among the district agencies and resulted in a stronger sense of participation during meetings.

The platform also helped both the CSLP and the districts to update their individual reports and in particular, for the latter to capture progress of the project activities in the district work plans and reports. It also created the opportunity for striking collaborative activities between the CSLP and other district agencies. Such collaborations resulted in better appreciation of use of resources for development activities in the local communities.



Figure 3: Staff of Shama District BAC delivering a presentation at a CSLP district update meeting



Figure 4: CSLP update meeting with District GoG institutions

2.3.3. Meetings with Traditional Authorities

The traditional authorities (chiefs, elders and queen mothers) are custodians of the land in all the CSLP intervention communities and the leaders of the communities. They are highly influential and are the first point of call in any community issue, including resolution of any land case or dispute and even complicated family disputes. This makes their buy-in and continuous support very critical to project success. They need, therefore, to be updated in order for them to stay abreast with project activities going on in their communities. With this in mind, the CSLP held bi-annual meetings with traditional authorities from its intervention communities. The objective of the meetings was to keep leaders well informed about all the interventions being carried out in their communities' progress of the interventions progress, any issues that required the attention of the traditional leaders for management or resolution. Also updates upcoming activities which may require their participation and support were shared. At such gatherings, the traditional leaders shared with the CSLP any feedback or recommendations related to the implemented activities. The endorsement of the project activities by the traditional leaders offered the project team greater satisfaction in working with farmers, fisher-folks and youth groups in the communities. The following were remarks from some traditional leaders at bi-annual meetings.

This platform created by the CSLP must be well applauded. Not all donor-funded projects and even corporate institutions involve the traditional leaders in their activities. The CSLP from its inception has stayed connected to us: chiefs, queen mothers and general elders of the various communities where they have interventions and that has contributed to the great nature of the project and the successes being recorded. The CSLP should keep it up.
—Chief of Fiasolo

We thank the CSLP and USAID for impacting positively on the lives of farmers in our communities. Great thanks to the project leadership and the staff for their commitment and efforts in ensuring that more farmers benefit from the project. Farmers are now happy by practicing good methods and the VSLA is making them financially strong.
Chief of Adubrim

Elders at Navrongo and Tweakor No 1 would still urge CSLP to come with many visitors to see the good work done by the farmers on the project. We have advanced in terms of the activities by CSLP and other farmers should even visit our farms to learn. Our VSLA is also in great shape. If possible, we should also get a school club. Chief of Navrongo

CSLP should be applauded for supporting the tree planting exercise as part of the 2015 Kundum festival / 25th anniversary of the Paramount Chief. Chief of Adusuazo

We, the elders and people of Bokro are most grateful to the CSLP for not abandoning us and supporting us with the project interventions. We were reluctant at the initial stages due to bad experience with other projects in the past. Our VSLA members are ready to organize a series of general clean up exercise in the community to show the entire citizenry that activities of a group ought to benefit the entire community and that the CSLP is different and is really helping to improve our living conditions. Chief of Bokro



Figure 5: Traditional leaders at a CSLP bi-annual update meeting

2.4. Joint Field Monitoring with Stakeholders (Media Day)

To enable GoG stakeholders and the media get a better picture of project implementation and help them acquire primary information directly project direct beneficiaries, an annual field-based media day was instituted to coincide with one of the regional stakeholders' meetings within a given year. The occasion created opportunity for the regional and district government officials to experience and interact with project direct beneficiaries in the local communities.



Figure 6: CSLP female champion Gladys Atsu addressing the media during media day in her community

The primary participants were the government stakeholders and media personnel. Two communities were visited each year as detailed below.

- *2015: Held on May 20 at Adubrim and Ayawora (Ellembelle District)*
- *2016: Held on September 14 at Navrongo and Tweakor 1 (Jomoro Municipal)*
- *2017: Held on June 28 at Anyanzinli and Kamgbunli (Ellembelle District)*
- *2018: Held on June 28 at Asonti and Bomokrom (Nzema East Municipal)*

In FY 16, the highlight of the event, held in Navrongo and Tweakor 1 (both in Jomoro District) was the official announcement of the three-year \$4.5 million CSLP extension by Mr. Brian Conklin of the USAID Ghana Economic Growth Office. The event generated several positive media reports which are well documented by the CSLP.



Figure 7: Asonti school kids with GoG stakeholders and the media during a media day

3. Collaboration with Government of Ghana Institutions

The CSLP collaborated with several GoG institutions over its lifespan. Key among the collaborations were (i) collaboration with EPA and DoFA to organize a Training-of-Trainers workshop on Safe Use of Pesticides for DoFA staff from four coastal districts of the Western region; (ii) collaboration with the EPA, GES and WD of FC to train 74 teachers from 110 schools across four districts on Environmental education and Sanitation. These trainings reached over 900 students as part of the follow-up in 14 schools; (iii) The GES and the CSLP effectively partnering to form 20 climate change club in public schools across the coastal district. This has created over 1,300 environmental ambassadors; and (iv) The CSLP and COCOBOD working together to promote Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry in the farming communities. Collaboration is an important way of working as individuals and institutions cannot work in siloes to tackle development issues. This is because development issues such as climate change and its attendant effects rarely fit into a box that can be tackled by one actor.

4. Collaborations with Donor-Funded Projects

4.1. Collaborations with USAID-Funded Projects

In its efforts to promote collaborative learning, the CSLP embarked on exchange learning with a number of USAID-funded projects and also extended technical support to some projects to facilitate their work. Among the projects included:

- West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change Project (WA BiCC)
- Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING)
- Feed the Future Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (AgNRM) project
- Feed the Future Sustainable fisheries Management (SFMP) project

The CSLP and USAID/RING jointly produced a documentary on Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) and co-facilitated the organization of the first USAID/Ghana VSLA Summit. These collaborations allowed the project teams to compare notes, share lessons and experiences, and helped to improve on certain areas that needed attention. The CSLP also organized VSLA trainings from some CEWEFIA, local partner of SFMP to equip them with the necessary skills to run the VSLA model for SFMP project beneficiarie



Figure 8: CSLP & WA BiCC team at tree nursery site of CSLP female farmer, Mrs. Yaa Sekyiwaa

4.2. Collaboration with non-USAID Funded Projects

The CSLP effectively collaborated with the UKAid-funded Western Regional Coastal Foundation (WRCF) to scale up climate change awareness / education and conservation agriculture. The two institutions collaborated and printed environmental education brochures that were used as training material in training 25 Conversation Managers (of the WRCF) as Training-of-Trainers (ToT). The Conversation Managers in turn trained over 200 Community Volunteers who were tasked to also train stakeholder groups in 100 communities within the six coastal districts of the Western Region. The CSLP also supported the WRCF to introduce Climate Smart Agriculture practices to some communities within the coastal districts where the UKaid-funded project was working.

5. Findings, Lessons Learned and Discussions

The strong partnership and collaboration with the various GoG institutions proved helpful and beneficial as the project implementation moved from one fiscal year to the next. The approach to identify specific GoG institutions as key partners for each of the CSLP intervention areas and staying through with such agencies ensured the project greater successes. Thus, the project engaged partners in applicable activities and ensured such partners brought their expertise to help achieve stated objectives. For instance, involving DoFA in CSA practices, GES with youth engagement, NBSSI/BAC and Community Development on VSLA, WD of FC on wetlands management.

All the MMDAs integrated / captured CSLP activities in their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) and keenly followed project implementation and reporting. The effort by the CSLP to have its activities in the MTDPs of the six districts helped in fostering a greater collaboration. Local government agencies had a sense of ownership of activities and responded positively to the project implementation. Having project activities in their plans, and being part of the implementing team, led to improvements in the degree to which CSLP activities featured in the assemblies' quarterly reports to the regional administration. This reaffirms the fact that people support what they help create.

The CSLP also appreciated the inputs, strength and challenges of all stakeholders and acted on them appropriately. Being aware of partners strength and weaknesses enabled the team to plan in manner that benefitted both parties. For instance, a cross-cutting challenge of almost all GoG institutions engaged was inadequate logistics to carry out their mandate. During joint planning of activities, the CSLP ensured it contributed positively where possible to ensure a successful event. For instance, it was noted that most of the key GoG institutions especially at the district level lacked the resources needed for them to attain ease of mobility and effective collaboration. These included inadequate number of staff and vehicles needed for field activities. Such challenges limited their ability to be actively engage communities to a certain degree. In these instances, GoG personnel relied on CSLP's support to get to some remote communities.

Equally important for building strong collaborations and partnerships is to maintain effective communication with all stakeholders and the willingness to respond to partner invitations. The CSLP became a hub for climate change information for all the MMDAs and that involved responding to calls / request for data from various agencies at different times and for the needs for various audiences. The project team willingly responded to such calls (even at odd times).

In fact, the CSLP witnessed a very cordial relationship and involvement by most of the stakeholders. All the district assemblies engaged the CSLP as and when they desired and also responded positively to the CSLP when they were called upon for support. The update meetings with the regional and district GoG stakeholders further strengthened the communications system. Such meetings were well patronized and created huge motivation among the officials. Meetings also increased stakeholders' awareness on efforts

being made on the landscape to improve lives. Knowledge of activities will help the local government plan effectively for communities and know which interventions to carry out in place in order not to duplicate efforts to waste scarce resources. At district level meetings, the various departments realize that they could work together to achieve more, manage their scarce resources and also avoid duplication of efforts. Also, when officials of one assembly learnt of how the other assemblies were benefiting from support from the CSLP, they got motivated and make fresh requests for CSLP support. In all the meetings at the regional and district level, the project team welcomed suggestions, recommendations and criticisms from the stakeholders and used such comments to enhance the project performance, where need be. With the exception of the Forest Services Division at the regional level, the CSLP enjoyed great working relationship with all the government institutions. The regional FSD were not able to participate in most of CSLP events as would have been desired due to their busy schedules.

Participation of some government agencies in field activities with CSLP served as an important mechanism for long term sustainability of project interventions. For instance, the DoFA was actively involved in the training of community members in additional livelihood activities such beekeeping, snail, and mushroom production and also in the promotion of conservation agriculture. DoFA equally demonstrated readiness to scale up best agriculture learned from the CSLP in non-project intervention communities. Similarly, the EPA, GES and WD of FC collaborated with the CSLP to train 74 teachers from 110 schools across four districts and reached over 900 students as part of the follow-up in 14 schools. The GES and the CSLP effectively partnered to form 20 climate change club in public schools across the coastal district and created over 1,300 environmental ambassadors. Likewise, the CSLP and the COCOBOD promoted Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and agroforestry in the farming communities.

When the CSLP had difficulty in organizing trainings in spatial planning and GIS for MMDA staff, it took the regional LUSPA after a regional stakeholder meeting to help coordinate with the CSLP to conduct the trainings for the district staff. Thus, the quarterly meetings with the stakeholders, not only ensured regular communication but also brought positive dimensions to the way some activities were implemented and the efforts indicate the value of such meetings with regional and district stakeholders for project success and sustainability.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Stakeholder buy-in and benediction is critical to success and sustainability over time. The CSLP was very consistent and diligent with stakeholder involvement in the project implementation. This involved joint planning sessions, sharing of approved work plans, active involvement in field activities, quarterly review of activities with regional, district decision-makers and traditional authorities. These engagements contributed immensely to the successes recorded by the project. Traditional authorities and key Government of Ghana (GoG) institutions such as the WRCC, EPA, WD and FSD of FC, DoFA, GES, LUSPA, NBSSI and MMDAs were actively involved by the project in all the phases. With the exception of the FSD of FC, all the institutions played very significant roles in one form or another in CSLP's implementation and were essential part of the project's success.

As a recommendation, donor-funded projects must start and end with the target group in all the stages of the intervention (from design to implementation), ensure regular and effective stakeholder and partner communication, be thorough in educating traditional authorities about project goals and activities and also note that greater and sustainable results can be achieved by effectively working with and through partnerships.

From the CSLP's experience, it can be concluded that building strong partnerships with relevant government agencies help to promote and ensure project sustainability and maximize resources more effectively to enhance the lives of project beneficiaries. Nonetheless, it is prudent for projects to be aware of partner strength and weaknesses, actively engage partners in applicable activities and maintain effective communication. Similarly, development project implementers need to appreciate the inputs and challenges of partners and be willing to respond to their invitations and needs.