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RESILIENCY IN NORTHERN GHANA (RING) ANNUAL REPORT FY 2016 (October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016) Contract No. AID-641-C-14-00002



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USAID RESILIENCY IN NORTHERN GHANA (RING) ANNUAL REPORT

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACF	AgriCorps Fellows
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
CBMC	Community-Based Mass Media Campaign
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
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
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plan
MTMSG	Mother-to-Mother Support Group
MUAC	Mid/Upper-Arm Circumference
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NL	Natural Leader
NRCC	Northern Region Coordinating Council
NRHD	Northern Regional Health Directorate
ODF	Open-Defecation Free
OFSP	Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato
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
RDSO	Regional Department of Social Development
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
SWO	Social Welfare Officer
TA	Technical Assistance
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
WIAD	Women in Agricultural Development
WSMT	Water and Sanitation Management Team

Executive Summary

Having directly benefited more than 36,400 vulnerable homes during the first two years of implementation, RING is well on track to meet its contract target of directly benefiting 42,000 households over the life of the project with interventions such as small ruminants, orange flesh sweet potatoes (OFSP), leafy green vegetable, soybean cultivation, and other interventions currently at various stages of implementation. During the fiscal year, Global Communities RING prioritized the scale-up of OFSP cultivation, as well as the expansion of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) across all partner districts, insuring that households could benefit from both dietary diversification, as well as regular access to savings and loans.

In addition to these strategic livelihoods interventions, households received complementary messaging and input support to improve behaviors related to nutrition, and water access, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH). To date, RING has reached more than 169,000 individuals through programming of activities including mass media communication (durbars), training of public service providers and volunteers, and improved water access and sanitation through borehole and latrine repairs, and hand washing stations.

As districts completed their 2015 activity implementation and steadily rolled-out their 2016 Annual Work Plans (AWP), the Global Communities RING team focused its efforts on supporting GOG partners to carry out effective and timely supportive monitoring visits to households cultivating crops or rearing livestock. Intensified VSLA efforts undertaken in FY16 culminated with 573 new groups formed and nearly US\$132,000 saved by the 15,873 newly enlisted members. All 17 partner districts cultivated OFSP and ultimately 2,101 farmers were supported with 1.3 million vines that were distributed by Global Communities RING in partnership with the University for Development Studies. Drastic improvement in small ruminant implementation led to less than 1% mortality rate among the more than 9,900 animals distributed to the 3,426 beneficiary households.

Global Communities RING also assisted district teams to carry out critical facility- and community-level support activities for nutrition, including facilitating data utilization and outreach planning trainings which benefitted more than 540 health staff. Cooking demonstrations continued to be a project mainstay as nearly 9,000 women and men learned the benefits of incorporating soybean, OFSP and moringa into their local family dishes. The year also saw the rollout of anemia testing and prevention measures, with 156 workers already receiving training on how to use the HemoCue® device to measure hemoglobin. In pursuit of the regional goal for an Open Defecation Free (ODF) Northern Region, Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) efforts continued with 89 communities triggered in 2016 and 65 communities achieving ODF certification status to date. In the process, more than 1,500 latrines and 1,100 hand washing stations were erected by households all made will locally available materials. During the year, RING also supported districts to repair 95 boreholes, providing an estimated 28,500 people with access to potable water. In communities where boreholes were not available, 436 households have benefitted from the distribution of water filtration systems and purification tablets.

In Governance, districts made great strides in addressing Public Financial Management (PFM) risks, engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, and supporting sub-structures to achieve their full potential. With a successful Area Council strengthening pilot underway, 46 Area Councils have been supported and 787 Assembly and Unit Committee Members have benefitted from capacity building training to better understand their roles and responsibilities. Of the planned 295 Community Action Plans scheduled for development in 2016, 175 have been developed so far with the remaining ones at various stages of completion. To foster

greater communication between the District Assemblies and its stakeholders, RING has supported 104 Community Consultations and Citizen's Forums and nine networking meetings.

Recognizing gaps in RING monitoring and evaluation system, Global Community RING improved the existing system, including a review of project indicators and definitions, development of standardized data collection tools, and creation of a project beneficiary database.

The project also made great strides under the Social Behavior Change Communication umbrella, focusing on such efforts as the design of an OFSP logo and promotional song to support the social marketing of the nutrient-rich variety, as well as partnering with local media houses to support the dissemination of program-related messaging.

The RING support strategy will continue to focus on increasing women's options for income generation and their control over household assets. Additionally, based on the districts' plans for the remainder of 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 in an integrated fashion. RING applies a multidisciplinary 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 decreasing their time burden, increasing their control over household income, and increasing their social capital, thereby creating more resilient families.

Since 2012, RING has worked through Government of Ghana (GOG) systems to deliver services to some of the most impoverished communities in the Northern Region. In 2014, Global Communities was awarded the RING 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). As RING closes out the 2016 Fiscal Year (FY16), all districts are in the midst of successful implementation of planned agriculture, livelihood, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, and governance activities. RING will continue to work closely with the districts and regional leadership to ensure the effective delivery of quality services to vulnerable households.

This report covers Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) 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;
- 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

Overall, the finance and administration team is prepared for the upcoming fiscal year. With the onboarding of the new Director of Finance and Administration (DFA) in May, there has been a focus on making continued efforts to improve efficiencies, standardizing documentation, and adhering consistently to applicable rules and regulations. The staff has received training on the Global Communities Field Finance and Administrative Manual (FFAM) as well as coaching on accountability and effective communication techniques.

In addition to day-to-day project accounting and logistical support, the Global Communities RING finance and administration team supported the review and finalization of proposals received under the Annual Program Statement (APS). In total, Global Communities RING received 178 expressions of interest, leading to the submission of 38 proposals. After numerous review processes, Global Communities RING narrowed the list of prospects to six organizations:

- *Timtooni* – drip irrigation with solar pump technology;
- *John Kufuor Foundation* – aflatoxin reduction training for farmers engaged in groundnut production and linking those growers to markets;
- *Tibzaa* – intensive guinea fowl production in local settings, coupled with household trainings;
- *Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI)* – home gardens using small-scale drip irrigation;
- *Conservation Alliance* – underground water harvesting technology to support farming ventures; and

- *SEND Ghana* – community score card and graduation of existing Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) to larger credit organizations.

After conducting exhaustive reviews and field visits, senior management determined that only one organization (*Tibzaa*) warranted exploration for FY16 implementation. However, during the proposal revision process, it became clear to the team that, although a promising proposal, the actual implementation of the activity would prove to be a significant challenge as the business model proposed could not be articulated convincingly and budget assumptions were not realistic and did not offer sufficient value for money. This proposal has since been dropped from consideration.

2.1. Grants and Contracts

During this fiscal year, the grants and contracts team reviewed the project partners' invoices, facilitated payments, supported procurement of goods and services to enhance project implementation, and obtained the necessary approvals to carry out certain activities. Some notable milestones for the year include:

- Issuing payments for multiple task orders under the University for Development Studies (UDS) subcontract totaling US\$54,520, to facilitate support for orange fleshed sweet potato cultivation;
- Supporting the governance team during the close out of the 2015 district subcontracts and development and activation of the new 2016 subcontracts;
- Obtaining approval for the procurement of restricted agricultural and livelihoods commodities;
- Procuring drip irrigation kits, water pumps, and Poly tanks for distribution to sub-contracted districts;
- Procuring and distributing 84 Yamaha AG motorbikes to district partners to facilitate project implementation; and

During this past quarter, the grants and contracts team carried out a number of activities which supported the implementation of activities by project partners, such as UDS and Government of Ghana (GOG) entities, and by Global Communities RING. In coordination with the livelihoods and agriculture team, grants and contracts facilitated the approval for the procurement of restricted items (small ruminants, soya beans and groundnut seeds), supported the actual procurement of small ruminants for subcontracted districts, and of tree seedlings for distribution to districts carrying out the soil improvement pilot. The grants and contracts team also liaised with the governance team to finalize projections for the 2017 subcontracted districts, and supported the invoicing process and any modifications to the 2016 subcontracted district work plans. In preparation for the annual external audit, which will take place in the coming quarter, grants and contracts helped the rest of the finance and administration team select an audit firm to carry out the process.

2.2. Human Resources

During this fiscal year, human resources supported RING technical assistance by expanding our staff, aiding in transitions of incoming and outgoing staff, and ensuring that team members received performance feedback in a constructive and systematized manner. Some notable human resources milestones for the year include:

- Onboarding of additional Governance Advisors (GAs) so that there is one GA per district;
- Promoting two Governance Advisors to Governance Coordinators;
- Hiring a Social Behavior Change Communications (SBCC) Coordinator, a Project Accountant, a Communications Officer, an M&E Manager, a Senior Grants and Procurement Specialist,

and a VSLA Coordinator;

- Assisting Global Communities headquarters in the transition of the former and incoming DFA;
- Coordinating with the governance team to host the project’s first staff retreat; and
- Supporting the onboarding of two Nutrition Officers under the auspices of the John Snow, Inc. (JSI) subcontract.

At the close of the FY, Global Communities RING has a staff of 91, comprising 59 local staff, 3 expatriates, 7 staff under core implementing partners (JSI & Urban Institute), 1 Peace Corps Volunteer, and 21 consultants/temporary help. Departmental breakdowns are depicted in the figure below. JSI has five nutritionists providing technical support for nutrition activities, while UI has two Municipal Finance Specialists providing technical support for governance and financial management activities.

Figure 1 Summary of Global Communities RING Current Staff Distribution



During the year, Global Communities RING hired a VSLA Coordinator to support the fast-tracking of VSLA implementation across all RING districts. There are plans to hire twelve VSLA Facilitators in the coming quarter to support field-based group formation and basic trainings for these additional VSLAs. Global Communities RING will also hire an Information Technology (IT) Assistant to support the IT Manager as he divides his time between IT support for the project and the management of the RING M&E Database. Additionally, preparations are underway to hire twelve Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) Field Monitors, who will facilitate the scale-up of this activity in 6 targeted RING districts.

3. Project Partner Support

Global Communities RING technical and administrative efforts in Q4 centered on supporting GOG project partners to carry out planned activities across all component areas. Given the season, there was an emphasis on conducting supportive monitoring and supervision of the numerous agriculture efforts, scaling up of complementary activities, such as VSLAs, Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MTMSG), and CLTS, and rolling out timely community engagement activities under the governance component.

Global Communities RING provided support to regional departments of the GOG as they undertook activities on their Annual Work Plans (AWPs). The Regional Agriculture Department (RAD) and Regional Department for Social Development (RDSD) carried out technical trainings for their district-level staff, covering such topics as biosecurity for livestock interventions and integrated pest management, and social protection and poverty graduation, respectively. Global Communities RING also provided support to the Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit (RPCU) as they facilitated three rounds of 2016 AWP mid-year review and 2017 AWP planning sessions for all 17 partner Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). All regional departments undertook some level of supportive monitoring as well, either jointly with the Northern Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) or by individual department.

In addition to direct technical support for our government partners and continued successful engagement with UDS, Global Communities RING liaised with private sector entities to facilitate the supply of necessary goods and services to the districts. To support the rollout of small ruminant top up support in Chereponi, Gushegu, and North Gonja Districts, Global Communities RING enlisted the services of Ako Daniels Agency to procure, quarantine, and distribute healthy animals to the target beneficiary communities, while district field officers facilitated household trainings and carried out supportive monitoring visits. To support efforts on the live fencing pilot, Global Communities RING engaged with Rain Corps to provide tree seedlings and technical training to women beneficiaries on planting and maintaining the trees. The nutrition team continued its successful collaboration with UNICEF and the World Food Program, and also engaged with local radio stations to air nutrition-related serial dramas and spots. The governance team also initiated a series of capacity building trainings centered on asset management and called upon a consultant (Musah Alhassan) to support facilitation in all 17 districts and the NRCC. As detailed in the individual component sections below, Global Communities RING provided targeted and timely technical support throughout the fiscal year, resulting in strong district performances.

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 year. Note that the AMEP is currently under review with USAID based on recommendations from Evaluate for Health (E4H) and Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support Services (METSS), but information provided below is based on the new indicators.

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

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
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 two years	30.46% ¹	N/A	30.46%	N/A	24.37%	-	-
2	HL.9-g Prevalence of anemia among children 6-59 months(O)	Baseline and End Line	82.10% ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	65.68%	-	-
3	HL.9-c Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age(R)	Every two years	21.59% ³	N/A	21.59%	N/A	17.27%	-	-
4	HL.9-b Prevalence of wasted children under five years of age(R)	Every two years	14.69% ⁴	N/A	14.69%	N/A	11.75%	-	-
Goal Level Output Indicators									
5	HL.9-1 Number of children under five (0-59 months) reached by USG-supported nutrition programs(R)	Annually	0	N/A	129,880	118,307 ⁵	616,458	248,187	40%
6	1.1.1: Number of communities supported through USG assistance (custom indicator)	Quarterly	0	98	239	456 ⁶	1,190	793	67%
7	1.1.2: Number of individuals reached by programming	Quarterly	0	10,765 ⁷	69,065 ⁸	89,392 ⁹	326,000	169,222	52%

¹ METSS RING/SPRING baseline survey, 2015.

² GDHS 2014 data for Northern Region

³ METSS RING/SPRING baseline survey, 2015

⁴ METSS RING/SPRING baseline survey, 2015

⁵ (Female= 60,337, Male=57,970)-This exclude September 2016 data which is not available on DHIMS 2 as at the time of reporting. The data will be reported in FY17 Q1 report.

⁶ Central Gonja-15, Chereponi-22, East Gonja-23, East Mamprusi-28, Gushegu-43, Karaga-27, Kpandai-38, Kumbungu-35, Nanumba North-11, Nanumba South-25, North Gonaj-34, Saboba-45, Sagnarigu-30, Savelugu-Nanton-30, Tamale Metro-15, Tolon-21 and West Gonja-14

⁷ 1,970 VSLA beneficiaries, LGV-370, 15 boreholes repair @300 persons per borehole, 1,573 Small ruminants, 1023 soybeans, Corn Mill and Salt rebagging 692 and food demonstration 637

⁸ This figure has been revised from 11,165 to 69,065 to include number of persons reached through borehole repairs-57,900

⁹ (Male=27,193 and Female=62,199), Food demonstration and durbar-37,775, Women of reproductive age-22,169, Borehole repair-28,500, training of CHVs-697 and training of CLWs-251

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
8	1.1.3: Number of women of reproductive age reached	Quarterly	0	3,662	10,636	22,169 ¹⁰	81,000	36,467	45%
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: Number of active informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	85	163	573	1,785	821	46%
10	1.1.1.2: Number of members of active informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	1,970	4,373	15,873	49,116	22,216	45%
11	1.1.1.3: Cumulative Amount (in USD) Saved by informal Savings and lending (VSLA) Group members	Quarterly	0	N/A	70,117	373,546 ¹¹	2,269,529	443,663	20% ¹²
12	1.1.1.4: Amount of funds loaned (in USD) annually by informal savings and lending groups	Quarterly	0	N/A	21,891	181,909 ¹³	751,560	203,800	27%
Intermediate Result 1b: Increased diversification of income throughout the year among target households									
13	EG.3-1: Number of households benefiting directly from USG assistance under Feed the Future	Annually	0	3,662	10,636	22,169 ¹⁴	42,000	36,467	87%
14	1.1.2.1: % of households who state they are more financially secure	Mid-Term and End line	0	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: Number of farmers and others who have applied improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance	Annually	0	2,970	7,778	12,160 ¹⁵	21,000	22,908	109%
16	1.1.3.1: % of target households benefiting from crop intervention reporting use of techniques to reduce post-harvest losses	Mid-Term and End line	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	75%	-	-
17	1.1.3.2: % of target households reporting shorter lean season	Mid-Term and End line	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	70%	-	-

¹⁰ Small ruminants=3,426, Soybeans=5,524, VSLA=10,009(included Shea nuts beneficiaries), Groundnut=895, Poultry=214 and OFSP=2101. LGV communities are mostly VSLA and Soybeans communities and therefore counting them will be potential duplicates.

¹¹ This is equivalent to GHC 1,483,536.00 at an exchange rate of \$1 to GHC3.9715

¹² Many groups were formed recently and have not done much savings

¹³ This is equivalent to GHC 722,452.00 at an exchange rate of \$1 to GHC3.9715

¹⁴ This figure represents 579 Female headed households and 21,590 Male headed households and they are all new households benefitting this year. However 3,333 households including 199 female headed and 3,134 male headed households who benefitted in 2015 are continuing this year

¹⁵ Small ruminants=3,426, Soybeans=5,524, Groundnut=895, Poultry=214 and OFSP=2,101

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
18	1.1.3.3: % target households using improved practices in horticulture, small animal husbandry, and other alternative livelihoods	Quarterly	0	81%	93%	82%	90%	82%	91%
19	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)	Annually	0	85	163	636 ¹⁶	1,785	884	50%
20	1.1.3.4: Number of small ruminants distributed to beneficiaries as a result of USG assistance	Quarterly	0	4,783	9,548	9,963	42,500	24,294	57%
21	1.1.3.5: % change in number of small ruminants owned by beneficiaries	Annually	0	N/A	11%	3% ¹⁷	25%	3%	12%
22	1.1.3.6: % of targeted households who have increased their income through RING supported activities	Annually	0	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: % of households adopting improved nutrition practices	Midline and End Line	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	Pending HH survey in FY17	-	-
Intermediate Result 2a: Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households									
24	1.2.1.1: % respondents in target communities knowledgeable of appropriate infant and young child feeding practices	Baseline, Midline and End Line	34.68 ¹⁸ %	N/A	34.68%	N/A	60%	-	-
25	1.2.1.2: Number of service delivery channels that mainstream appropriate nutrition messages throughout the community	Midline and End Line	0	2	5	N/A	5	5	100%
26	HL.9.1-c: Women's Dietary Diversity: Mean number of food groups consumed by women of reproductive age(S)	Every two years	4 ¹⁹	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.5 ²⁰	-	-

¹⁶ VSLA groups=573 and WSMTs with bank accounts=63

¹⁷ This is based on monitoring data for 2014, 2015 and 2016 beneficiaries in nine (9) districts. A total of 10,127 small ruminants were received by 3,118 beneficiaries and 10,250 small ruminants were available, 197 sold and 3,709 death at the time of the monitoring.

¹⁸ METSS Baseline survey 2015

¹⁹ From METSS PBS 2012 data

²⁰ This is the average of the 9 food groups per women of reproductive age. The nine food groups includes:

1. Grains, roots and tubers; 2. Legumes and nuts; 3. Dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese); 4. Organ meat; 5. Eggs;
6. Flesh foods and other misc. small animal protein; 7. Vitamin A dark green leafy vegetables;
8. Other Vitamin A rich vegetables and fruits; 9. Other fruits and vegetables.

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
27	HL.9.1-a Prevalence of children 6-23 months receiving a minimum acceptable diet	Baseline, Midline and End Line	10%	N/A	N/A	N/A	28%	-	-
28	HL.9.1-b:Prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding of children under six months of age	Baseline, Midline and End Line	60%	N/A	N/A	N/A	70%	-	-
29	3.1.9.2(2)Number of health facilities with established capacity to manage acute undernutrition (S)	Annually	0	12	188	234 ²¹	244	234	96%
30	3.1.9(1)Number of people trained in child health and nutrition through USG-supported programs (S)	Annually	0	1,067	3,000	3,787 ²²	10,274	7,854	76%
31	1.2.1.3: Number of people reached by USG-supported nutrition programs through Food demonstrations and community durbars	Quarterly	0	637	18,522	37,775 ²³	150,135	56,934	38%
Intermediate Result 2b: Increased adoption of hygiene and sanitation behaviors in target households and their communities									
32	3.1.8.1-1: % of Households Using an Improved Drinking Water Source (FA 3.1.8.1-1)	Baseline, Midline and End Line	69%	N/A	69%	N/A	80%	-	-
33	3.1.8.1-2: % of respondents who know any 3 critical times of hand washing	Baseline, Midline and End Line	91%	N/A	91%	N/A	95%	-	-
34	1.2.2.1: Number of hand washing stations installed in commonly used public spaces	Quarterly	0	N/A	358	209	1,651	567	34%
35	1.2.2.2: % of RING communities certified as Open Defecation Free (ODF)	Quarterly	0	0	0.4%	8% ²⁴	33%	8%	24%
36	3.1.8.2-2: Number of people gaining access to an improved sanitation facility (RIA)	Annually	0	N/A	15,908	12,058 ²⁵	61,966	27,966	45%
37	3.1.8.2-3: Number of institutional latrines repaired (RIA)	Annually	0	N/A	32	12	129	44	34%
38	1.2.2.3: Number of individuals trained as WSMT members to manage water facility	Annually	0	N/A	138	458 ²⁶	2,171	596	27%

²¹ Out of 234 facilities with OPC, only 13 of them have IPC

²² Male= 2,277 and Female =1,510

²³ Male-12,833 and Female-24,942, with Food demonstration at 8,976 including 1,804 active participants and 7,172 Observers. Durbar participants-28,799

²⁴ 64 communities achieved ODF with 793 communities reached by RING to date

²⁵ 1,566 HHs latrines were constructed serving a total of 12,058 people at 7.7 members per HH

²⁶ Total 458(Female-173, Male-285) with district breakdown as follows Savelugu-Nanton-78, Kpandai-98, East Gonja-72, Karaga-70, Nanumba North-70 and West Gonja-70

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
39	1.2.2.4: Number of area mechanics, pump care takers and Latrine artisans trained as a result of USG assistance	Annually	0	N/A	25	101 ²⁷	530	126	24%
40	1.2.2.5: Number of improved water sources repaired for beneficiary communities through USG Assistance	Annually	0	42	193	95	596	330	55%
Component 3 Result: Strengthened local support networks addressing the ongoing (nutrition and livelihoods) needs of vulnerable households									
41	1.3.1: % of households reporting improvements in nutrition and livelihood services from local government	Every 2 years	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									
42	1.3.1.1: Number of target DAs that are eligible for direct funding from USAID	Annually	0	6	10	9	17	9	53%
43	1.3.1.2: Mean percentage change in District FOAT Score among MMDAs not yet receiving direct funds from USAID	Annually	N/A	N/A	16%	- ²⁸	75%	16%	21%
44 ²⁹	1.3.1.3: Percentage of direct-funded partner contribution toward the RING Annual Work Plan budget	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33%	-	-
45	1.3.1.4: Number of target MMDAs that institutionalize participatory planning and budgeting process for nutrition and livelihoods interventions	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	17	17	100%
46	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.	Annually	N/A	N/A	6	17	17	17	100%
47	1.3.1.6: Number of annual and medium-term plans by target DAs and the NRCC which prioritize good nutrition and include nutrition-related activities.	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	36	108	36	33%
48	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.	Quarterly	N/A	2	6	14	17	14	82%

²⁷ Karaga-19, Nanumba South-6, Nanumba North-6, Tamale Metro-5, East Gonja-36, Central Gonja-5, Savelugu-Nanton-14 and Tolon-10

²⁸ Foat scores for 2016 is not available until the end of FY17Q2

²⁹ Under construction

INDICATOR PERFORMANCE TRACKING TABLE (IPTT)									
#	Performance Indicator	Frequency	Baseline	FY14 Results	FY 15 Results	FY16 Results	LOP		
							Target	Cumulative Results	Progress To date (%)
49 ³⁰	1.3.1.8: 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	Annually	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	-	-
Intermediate 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									
50	1.3.2.2 Percentage of target households participating in community support groups	Annually	0	52%	39%	72%	80%	72%	90%
Intermediate Result 3c: Strengthened capacity of targeted DAs and the NRCC to monitor efforts for nutrition and livelihoods in their respective areas									
51	1.3.3.2: Number of coordination/review meetings between DAs and NRCC	Quarterly	0	N/A	34 ³¹	23 ³²	462	57	12%

³⁰ Under construction

³¹ NRCC has indicated the availability of the data and will need more time to submit that to M&E Unit

³² 6 Planning and review meeting at cluster level in October 2015 and August 2016 and NRCC one monitoring visit to all 17 MMDAs.

4.1. Component One

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

During the year, the Global Communities RING Agriculture and Livelihoods Team supported partner MMDAs to strategically scale up Component 1 activities, such as OFSP cultivation and VSLA. A number of activities – soybean and groundnut cultivation, small ruminant management – went under review for best practice determination, while others, such as cage fishing, were removed from the activity menu. Key areas of support this year included coaching for district officers to conduct timely and consistent monitoring visits to beneficiary households, as well as procurement and distribution of goods and services under the Top Up Support strategy (small ruminants, drip irrigation kits, VSLA boxes, etc.). Additional details on all livelihoods and agriculture activities carried out in FY16 can be found below.

Village Savings and Loans Associations

VSLA has evolved into one of the flagship interventions of the RING project, given its impact on the women's ability to expand their livelihoods and access credit at critical periods throughout the year. Initial indications are that VSLA makes a sustainable impact on vulnerable households by increasing their food security, allowing women the opportunity to invest in income generating activities, and supporting family needs, such as supplementary food, healthcare, and education.

Although only three districts implemented VSLAs in 2014, it wasn't until the activity scaled up in 2015 that many districts took note of the intervention and its potential. During the 2015 implementation cycle, eleven districts selected VSLAs under their RING Annual Work Plan (AWP). The low-cost, easy to set-up activity proved to have a real impact on the households and the women were enthusiastic. They finally had access to loans and could rejuvenate struggling business ventures, pay down lines of credit at stores or with healthcare providers, and secure school fees for their children. Based on these early successes, Global Communities RING prioritized VSLA and succeeded in ensuring that all districts implemented the activity in 2016.

Though each district included it in their work plan, Global Communities RING added further support to the intervention by hiring VSLA Field Facilitators – short-term consultants - to work alongside district staff in different communities to distribute inputs, train members, and get savings started before handing over general management to the district. Even though district capacity to implement VSLAs has been sufficiently built through numerous trainings, they are still hampered by their internal human resources and can only work in so many communities at once time. The hiring of additional man power to rapidly scale up VSLAs has proven effective.

As of the close of the FY, all districts had operationalized their planned VSLAs, as well as provided monitoring support to groups formed in previous years. This intervention has proven vital to improving women's access to savings and credit, and has provided a perfect channel to deliver financial literacy, numeracy and basic business skills trainings. VSLAs have also proven to be useful in terms of increasing women's control over household assets. Many women have utilized their VSLA funds to finance their families' health, education, and food needs during the lean season, to rejuvenate small income generating activities and, in the majority of cases, start new micro-enterprises. This progress does not only diversify income streams, but it smooths household income throughout the year, particularly during the lean season when funds and food are often scarce in vulnerable households.

Global Communities RING recognized that the VSLA intervention has a high potential for

sustainability after the close of the project, given the low maintenance costs, and the financial management skills and the cultivation of a savings culture imparted on the women engaged. To further strengthen the impact of RING livelihoods and agriculture interventions, Global Communities RING coordinated with all districts in 2016 to begin layering VSLAs as a complement to all livelihoods and agriculture interventions. Including for examples communities which received shea support in 2014 and communities that received soybeans and leafy green vegetables in 2016. Efforts are ongoing as of the close of the fiscal year to reach as many 'back log' communities as possible, both through district implementation and Global Communities RING VSLA Field Facilitator Top Up Support. During 2017 work plan development, all districts will be advised to cover all communities that received support in the past, as well as those planned for 2017.

Progress made in FY16 on all aspects of VSLA implementation are noticeable. During the reporting period, Global Communities RING provided a Training of Trainers (TOT) on VSLA to 72 GOG staff (29 women and 43 men) in 8 MMDAs³³. The officers were mainly drawn from the Business Advisory Center (BAC)/Rural Enterprise Project, Community Development and Social Welfare, Cooperatives and Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA). These officers led downstream formation, training, and development of VSLA implementation teams in their respective districts. The technical training covered all aspects of VSLA, including community sensitization, group dynamics, share-out and management of funds, and follow-up actions to guide individuals to invest funds in a strategic manner. The trained MMDA VSLA field officers provide supervisory monitoring, as well as general guidance on required skills sets, such as record keeping and savings management during the savings meetings.

Table 2 Progress of New VSLAs formed in 2016 (in Ghana cedis)

District	# of Communities	# of Groups	# of Members	Amount Saved	Amount Loaned	Total Asset (interest on loans + social fund)
Nanumba South	4	8	219	24,299	7,916	25,902
Nanumba North	13	24	657	54,735	39,250	60,416
Tamale Metro	9	12	313	27,627	10,464	29,371
Tolon	14	20	591	54,496	40,050	59,068
Savelugu	28	48	1,436	41,856	20,760	46,452
Saboba	15	30	905	5,147	-	5,890
West Gonja	10	31	951	40,139	32,778	41,850
Chereponi	10	32	866	1,031	-	1,113
Sagnarigu	36	54	1,455	19,265	300	20,894
North Gonja	19	42	1,208	14,586	-	17,129
Central Gonja	14	27	748	25,220	-	26,910
Kumbungu	40	72	1,959	64,499	24,520	75,498
East Mamprusi	18	28	774	27,896	12,743	30,844
Karaga	19	39	935	15,363	-	16,783
Gushegu	25	52	1,381	13,562	1,020	15,794
East Gonja	7	20	601	61,752	44,100	69,354
Kpandai	15	34	874	16,691	400	18,238
Totals	296	573	15,873	508,164	234,301	561,506

The Global Communities RING technical team also periodically reaches out to provide guidance on VSLA operations to both the district teams and the beneficiary women. This support comes from Governance Advisors and Livelihoods Technical Officers in the form of visiting group meetings to monitor the guidance provided by district technical officers, and as well as

³³ Nanumba South (7 men), Sagnarigu (7 women and 7 men), Tamale Metro (9 women and 2 men), Gushegu (3 women and 2 men), Kpandai (3 men), Karaga (2 women and 3 men), North Gonja (2 women and 11 men) and Kumbungu (7 women and 7 men).

facilitating VSLA performance data collection for entry into the SAVIX (Savings Groups Information Exchange) database.

VSLA Success Cultivates Community Enthusiasm
Gushegu District

Given the word-of-mouth success of the intervention thus far, 15 men (husbands of RING beneficiaries) in the Nabaliba #2 community in Gushegu spontaneously formed their own VSLA group after observing their wives' performance under the initiative. So far, they have **saved GHs 1,200 with a social fund of GHs 250**. This group is under observation to see how effective male involvement in VSLA can be, especially its potential impact on the resiliency of the household.

These efforts by partner districts and Global Communities RING resulted in 573 new VSLAs formed in 2016, comprising 15,873 members in 296 communities, with an average of 27 members in each group and nearly 2 groups per community. Over the course of three months, the Global Communities RING VSLA Field Facilitators contributed

to the formation of 220 groups and 5,261 members in six districts³⁴.

There is a more than 100% increase in average savings by new groups in 2016 compared to 2015 which Global Communities RING attributes to an increased awareness of VSLA benefits, both by word-of-mouth, as well as the publicity many groups have gained when districts implement share out durbars. During field monitoring visits, new members in Kpalga community of Kumbungu District had reportedly been anticipating their VSLA start up for several months after hearing positive stories from neighboring Mbanaayili.



Photo 1 RING VSLA session at Nanaliba #2 community, Gushegu District

³⁴ Gushegu, Karaga, Kpandai, Kumbungu, North Gonja and Sagnarigu.

Table 3 Cumulative VSLA Performance to Date (by District and in Ghana Cedis)

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
Chereponi	30	101	2,412	132,184	92,994	143,147	76,229	32	909
Central Gonja	20	34	948	53,542	11,306	57,640	13,770	2	200
East Mamprusi	48	88	2,282	106,926	42,519	196,857	150,855	54	1,357
Kumbungu	38	72	1,959	4,499	24,520	75,498	23,270	4	120
Nanumba North	18	36	947	94,991	96,769	100,969			
North Gonja	24	48	1,388	67,490	53,592	79,393	53,645	6	240
Saboba	44	83	2,342	150,967	67,758	189,399	139,343	30	848
Savelugu-Nanton	30	60	1,791	83,200	65,011	93,552	82,164	12	349
Tolon	18	28	831	77,518	97,209	123,563	53,651	8	224
West Gonja	27	52	1,538	197,110	106,574	227,182	169,154	15	457
East Gonja	11	20	601	61,752	44,100	69,354	Districts have not yet conducted share outs		
Tamale Metro	7	12	313	27,627	10,464	29,371			
Karaga	25	39	935	15,363	-	16,783			
Gushiegu	25	52	1,381	13,562	1,020	15,794			
Kpandai	21	34	874	16,691	400	18,238			
Nanumba South	4	8	219	24,299	7,916	25,902			
Sagnarigu	25	54	1,455	9,265	300	20,894			
Totals	415	821	22,216	1,136,986	722,452	1,483,536	762,081	163	4,704

The table above presents cumulative performance across all partner districts. More than GHs 1,483,500 (US\$ 373,500) has been saved by 22,000-plus VSLA members. Groups granted GHs 722,452 in loans, representing an average of GHs 141 per 5,117 borrowers.

VSLA: Anecdotes of Success and Resiliency

Small Business Expansion, Animal Enterprises, and Farming Efforts

During general monitoring visits, Global Communities RING has heard numerous anecdotes about how VSLA engagement has positively impacted member's lives, and subsequently their households.

In the community of Badu in the East Mamprusi District, Madam Fati Musah narrated how her VSLA loan ensured her family did not go to bed hungry during the lean season once she took out a loan to begin an income generating activity. In Chereponi, Madam Nabilimu Lakpen from Naja Najil Lipobilsol VSLA took up pig-rearing after receiving a GHs100 loan and buying a sow. After 18 months, she now owns ten pigs and will begin selling them soon at a profit.

In West Gonja's Kananto community, Madam Fatimah Abudu explained how she was able to rejuvenate her stagnating cooking ingredients retail with a loan she took from her group: *"I had a small table top business selling cooking oil, salt, Maggi and onions. I could not buy the items in bulk because my capital was very small (GHs60). I took a loan of GHs200 from my group and was able to buy a jerry can of cooking oil, bowl of onions and half dozen of Maggi cubes, I was amazed at the profit I made after sales because I [was able to buy in bulk] at wholesale prices. My business is booming and now I have added sales of other cooking ingredients like canned tomatoes, spices and mackerel. I continue to save and I have increased the number of shares I now buy at every meeting because now I have a regular source of income."*

Madam Zenabu of the Nakpanzo community in Savelugu was shocked at the money she had been able to save throughout the cycle. She explained, *"I never knew 'spending and saving small-small' could sum up to so much money in a short time. I received 250 cedis after my group shared out and I used it to plow and bought inputs to cultivate an acre of groundnuts. I have just finished harvesting and am sure to get about six bags from my own farm. That's is so amazing, I am almost in tears."*

Madam Niematu Abdul-Rashid of Dazio in East Mamprusi District perhaps summed up her VSLA experience the best when she said, *"It is like we are in the harvest because it is unusual for me to have cash on me at this time of year (the lean season)."*

Global Communities RING and district implementation teams witnessed on several occasions the evidence of VSLA share-out funds providing an economic cushion to vulnerable households

during difficult times (payment of time bound school fees, health care needs, food needs), as well as provide women the opportunity to invest in income generating activities. The table below shows cumulative utilization of funds shared out by 4,577 VSLA members in nine MMDAs during the reporting period.

Of the GHs 762,081 shared, about 70% was invested in agriculture (plowing, inputs, and labor), which was not surprising considering the majority of the share outs had been scheduled to coincide with the beginning of the agricultural calendar. The women saw the opportunity to invest in farming to ensure food security for their families and to make profit with good yields. The majority of women invested in groundnuts, soybeans, sesame and maize cultivation, while some women invested in livestock (sheep, goats, pigs, fowls). Eleven percent of share out funds were applied to income generating activities (IGA), mainly grain banking, cooking ingredients retail, rice parboiling, groundnut oil processing, selling porridge, pito brewing, and food vending, among others. Of the total share outs, 10% was allocated to pay their children's school fees, which is a significant impediment to continuing education in the rural north. About 6% was invested in health care (buying medicines, paying clinic bills, renew health insurance), while 2% was used to meet other personal needs (social events and buying cooking supplies, such as salt and *pepe*).

Table 4 Cumulative Share-Out Summary (in Ghana cedis)

District	Members Who Received Share-Out Funds	# of Groups Shared Out	Household Allocation of Funds Received After Share-Out					
			Total	Health	Agriculture	Education	Business/IGAs	Others
Saboba	848	30	139,343	9,560	98,758	16,934	12,091	2,000
Tolon	240	8	53,651	5,945	33,291	4,535	7,255	2,625
Savelugu	349	12	82,164	7,325	56,852	6,543	9,785	1,659
Chereponi	909	32	76,229	5,765	56,245	7,543	5,245	1,431
Central Gonja	47	2	13,770	1,135	10,235	1,225	985	190
East Mamprusi	1,357	54	150,855	5,875	120,562	8,765	13,845	1,808
West Gonja	527	18	169,154	4,875	132,865	13,985	15,865	1,564
North Gonja	180	6	53,645	2,345	25,875	9,985	3,985	1,455
Kumbungu	120	4	23,270	2,452	9,405	4,587	5,865	961
Totals	4,577	166	762,081	45,277	544,088	74,102	74,921	13,693

Considering the massive scale-up efforts in 2016, VSLA coverage in RING communities at the end of this reporting period stands at 52% of the 793 communities reached with livelihoods interventions thus far. In the coming quarter, Global Communities RING will introduce 12 more VSLA Field Facilitators to accelerate the implementation and rapidly reach a 100% target. The Life of Project target is to reach more than 49,000 RING women with VSLA support, with more than US\$2.2 million in cumulative savings mobilized and US\$750,000 in loans accessed by target beneficiaries.

Orange Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP)

OFSP is a climate-smart crop due to its ability to thrive in less favorable conditions, making it an ideal plant for poor smallholder farmers in Northern Ghana. In Q1 of FY16, all 383 OFSP beneficiaries from the 2015 pilot harvested their roots, resulting in generally impressive yields given the erratic rainfall patterns throughout the 2015 farming season. Though more than 95% of the women engaged had never worked with OFSP before, they harvested 25.5MT of the nutrient dense food (see Table 4).

To support consumption after harvest, MMDAs and the Global Communities RING Team, in collaboration with UDS, conducted a TOT on OFSP harvesting and utilization for 34 district officers (28 men and 6 women), including District Nutrition Officers, Women in Agriculture Development (WIAD) Officers and AEAs from the 17 districts. The trainees subsequently conducted harvesting and utilization trainings in all 29 pilot communities, with 695 women and

487 men participating. Facilitators demonstrated how to incorporate the relatively unfamiliar crop in five main local dishes – porridge, *petepete*, boiled roots, fried chips and leaf stew – which generated great interest. The tasting of the dishes went well and, subsequently, each of the communities expressed a desire to cultivate OFSP again so they would have continued access to the crop.

Highlights of harvesting and utilization trainings included timely harvesting to prevent infestation of pests, disease, and overly fibrous roots, and the use of OFSP in complementary feeding for weaning children and pregnant and lactating mothers due to the high nutrient content. Interest in the OFSP activity increased significantly and in FY16, Global Communities RING developed a scale-up strategy to ensure more that more households would have access to the crop.

Table 5 Results of 2015 OFSP Pilot

District	# of Communities	# of Female Beneficiaries ³⁵	Area Planted (Acres)	Yield (kgs)	Harvesting & Utilization Trainings		
					Men	Women	Total
Central Gonja	2	NA	0.5	316	25	28	53
Chereponi	2	20	0.25	430	5	20	25
East Mamprusi	1	20	0.25	1,024	12	45	57
East Gonja	1	20	0.25	1,224	51	37	88
Gushegu	3	29	0.75	5,892	75	137	212
Karaga	2	49	0.25	524	30	50	80
Kpandai	1	20	0.5	1,292	25	18	43
Kumbungu	1	NA	0.25	1,233	8	14	22
Nanumba North	1	16	0.25	2,516	57	64	121
Nanumba South	2	100	0.5	1,203	49	50	99
North Gonja	1	24	0.25	1,250	6	23	29
Saboba	2	20	0.25	3,060	8	35	43
Sagnarigu	1	25	0.25	803	28	47	75
Savelugu	4	NA	0.2	492	41	49	90
Tamale Metro	2	22	0.25	886	12	0	12
Tolon	1	18	0.2	441	27	39	66
West Gonja	2	NA	0.5	2,922	28	39	67
Totals	29	383	5.65	25,508	487	695	1,182

To achieve the scale up goal of reaching more than 2,000 households in 2016, Global Communities RING, in collaboration with UDS, the Savannah Agriculture Research Institute, and the Regional Agriculture Department, Regional Directorate of Health (Nutrition Department), hosted a stakeholder meeting to review lessons learned, best practices and strategies to facilitate increased production of OFSP in 2016. In total, 78 participants (68 men and 10 women) contributed their experience and knowledge to develop a solid scale up strategy.

The Regional Nutrition Officer, Alhaji Sofo, encouraged all MMDA leaders, AEAs, and DNOs to work together on the scale-up plan to improve the availability of nutrient dense crops in the region, which would complement the standard cereal-laden northern diets. He echoed the RING Project sentiment that nutrition improvement was not possible without agriculture and the two needed to work together to achieve results. Key lessons came at the beginning and end of the cultivation process – timely access to quality vines was necessary for a health crop, and improved storage capacity was important to keep sufficient quantities for consumption.

³⁵ Preliminary numbers are available, but the M&E Unit has not received the supporting documentation from districts marked 'NA' to include the figures.

At the stakeholder meeting, Global Communities RING declared 2016 as the ‘Year of the Orange Evolution’ in the Northern Region and announced the plan to reach more than 2,000 women with one million OFSP vines. To achieve this goal, Global Communities RING partnered



Photo 2 Dr. Issah Abubakari speaking at the OFSP experience-sharing event, in the presence of Regional Nutrition Officer, Alhaji Sofo (L) and RING COP, Philippe LeMay (R)

with UDS to establish multiple decentralized vine multiplication centers in eight partner MMDAs in addition to the “mother” site in Tamale (see the map in Figure 1). To sustain the process, UDS also trained AEAs and some selected community representatives (24 men) from the vine multiplication sites on vine multiplication procedures.

With proper care and steady rains, the nine decentralized sites yielded more than 1.5 million vines in 2016, enabling Global Communities RING to not only support partner districts with OFSP cultivation, but also other

USAID IPs (USAID/ SPRING and USAID/ATT) and the US Peace Corps, which expressed interest to implement in their own intervention sites.

USAID/SPRING ‘layered’ the OFSP intervention on Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSG) in seven districts where RING and SPRING projects overlap and USAID/ATT provided the vines to farmers involved in soil improvement demonstrations. Global Communities

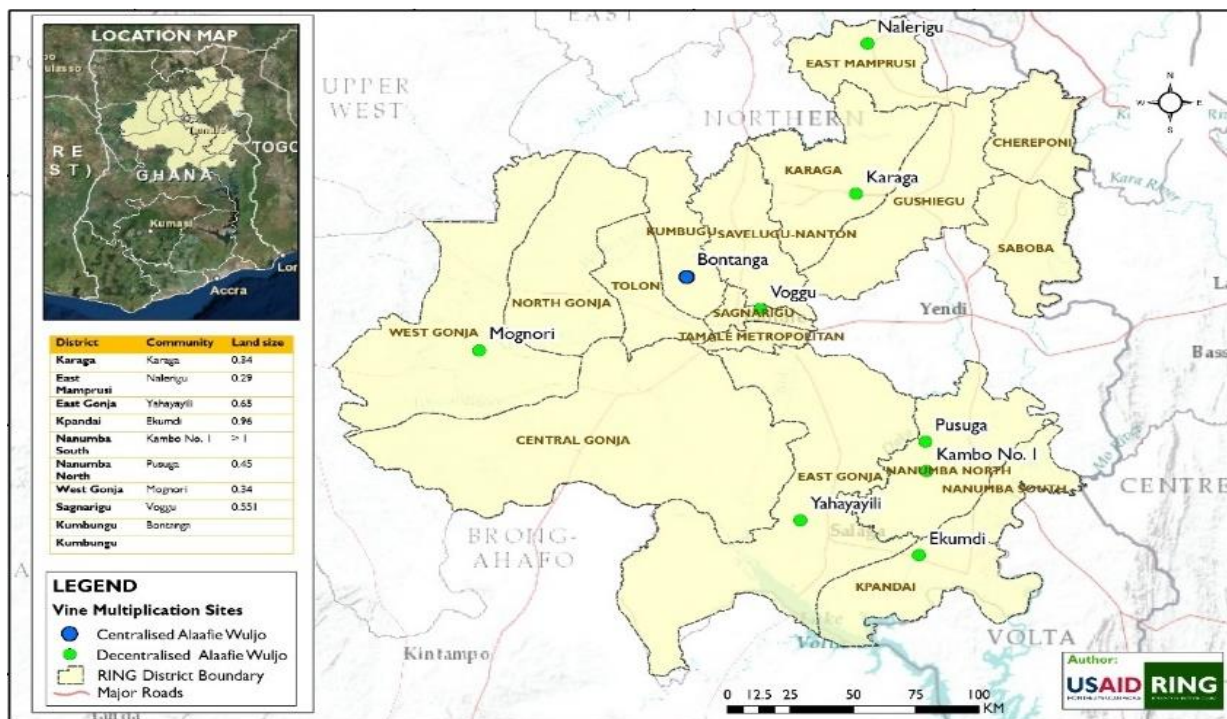


Figure 2 Map of decentralized OFSP vine multiplication sites

RING in collaboration with UDS, US Peace Corps, USAID/ATT and USAID/SPRING Ghana distributed a total of 1.5 million vines to 3,482 households in 109 communities³⁶.



Photo 3 Healthy vines ready for harvesting at Botanga OFSP vine multiplication site

Sweet Tooth for OFSP Cultivation
From Unknown to Dietary Staple?

The white Sweet Potato is already well-known and farmed throughout Northern Ghana. However, the orange flesh version, which is high in beta-carotene, was relatively unknown. After the successful pilot in 2015, field reports indicate that several communities and households took extra efforts to ensure they were able to cultivate OFSP. In Nanumba South's Tampoaya community, women held some of the vines back from 2015 and used their drip irrigation system to nurse them until the rains began. They multiplied the vines on their own and planted them in 2016. There are also multiple reports from farmers that they've had 'vine thieves' on their plots. Though none of the farmers' fields have been damaged, the moves by farmers to gain access to the crop is indicative that it can become a mainstay among Northern Region household crops.

With the technical assistance provided to 2,101 specific RING beneficiary households, 2016 harvests are expected to exceed 250 metric tons. This figure will provide sufficient quantities of tubers per household to support consumption for two months, as well as allow for some sales. To ensure that the roots are properly stored and their shelf life is prolonged, the RING project with the support of UDS, trained 82 AEAs and US Peace Corps Volunteers (73 men and 9 women). All RING beneficiary households (including the 127 supported through engagement with Peace Corps) will be assisted by the AEAs to construct sandboxes to store the roots and ensure a consistent supply for household consumption.



Photo 4 Participants and Peace Corps Volunteer demonstrating planting methods



Photo 5 Participants demonstrating proper root storage using locally available materials

Table 6 OFSP Vines Distribution by District in FY16

³⁶ 2016 achievements attributable to the RING Project are 1,332,100 vines distributed to 2,101 households in 66 communities across all 17 districts.

District	# of Communities	# of Beneficiaries	Targets		Actuals	
			Quantity of Vines	Acres	Quantity of Vines	Acres
Central Gonja	4	213	127,800	10	153,700	11
East Mamprusi	3	150	90,000	7	90,000	7
Nanumba South	6	211	126,600	9	137,600	10
Nanumba North	5	201	120,600	9	137,600	10
Saboba	5	100	60,000	4	101,200	8
Savelugu	6	101	60,600	5	60,000	4
Tamale Metro	3	77	46,200	3	62,400	5
Tolon	3	123	73,800	6	94,400	7
West Gonja	2	50	30,000	2	30,000	2
Chereponi	4	91	54,600	4	30,000	2
Kpandai	3	100	60,000	4	78,400	6
East Gonja	2	34	20,400	2	21,000	2
North Gonja	2	166	99,600	7	12,000	1
Sagnarigu	7	261	156,600	12	184,200	14
Kumbungu	3	30	18,000	1	32,400	2
Gushiegu	5	138	82,800	6	73,600	5
Karaga	3	55	33,000	2	33,600	3
Totals	66	2,101	1,260,600	93	1,332,100	99

Table 7 Summary of OFSP Support Delivered via Project Partners

Partner	# of Communities	# of Beneficiaries	Target Quantity of Vines	Acres	Quantity Supplied	Acres
ATT (demo plots)	-	-	3,000	0	3,000	0
Peace Corps	4	127	25,400	2	25,400	2
SPRING	35	1,050	140,000	10	140,800	11
Soil Improvement Demo Plots (Alipe, Bonyasi, Nnalong, Jamaga, Zinyee)	5	204	32,000	2	14,000	1
Totals	44	1381	200,400	21	183,200	14

In an effort to increase the social market for OFSP consumption, Global Communities RING collaborated with three Northern Region music artists – Maigah Mustapha (“TM”), Mariwan Alhassan (“D-Almar”) and Salma Adam (“Princess Chizzy”) – to write and record a song promoting the cultivation of OFSP. The artists engaged in this effort *pro-bono* as part of their civic contribution to support the OFSP evolution campaign. The song was launched at a Tamale press conference, which included district partners, UDS and USAID. The song highlights the importance of OFSP cultivation towards improving food security and nutrition. Global Communities RING has partnered with radio stations in the region to broadcast the song.

Harvest for 2016 crops will take place in FY17 Q1, and as a result, households are making final preparations to their fields and district staff are undertaking regular monitoring to determine the readiness of the tuber for harvesting. These harvests will be accompanied by the standard utilization trainings, as well as training on improved storage using sandboxes made from local materials.

Soybean Cultivation

Soybean implementation in FY16 began with the compilation and analysis of yields from the 2015 farming season. Across all 17 districts, 4,163 beneficiaries each received support for one acre of soybean cultivation during the season. This produced a yield of nearly 610 MT of soybeans. The table below summarizes the district acreage (at one acre per beneficiary) and corresponding yields.

Table 8 2015 Soybean yield summary

District ³⁷	Total district yield (kg)	Acres	District average 100 kg bag/acre	Highest Yields (100kg bag)	Community with highest yield
East Mamprusi	54,500	249	2.25	8	Tisungu
Nanumba South	93,530	800	1.64	9.6	Kpasolgu
Karaga	27,350	185	1.49	4	Nangunkpang
Central Gonja	22,809	444	0.97	10	Alipe
Saboba	72,875	239	3.04	6.5	Nafechee
Tamale Metro	30,550	150	2.05	6	Tugu-Yipala
Tolon	25,678	270	0.66	2.5	Koblimagu/Zoonayili
Nanumba North	47,578	243	1.92	8.75	Obondow
Gushegu	25,600	100	2.56	4.5	Zamashegu/Momba
Chereponi	41,683	387	1.47	9	Upper Nansoni
Sagnarigu	17,750	110	1.61	5	Sanga
West Gonja	16,626	150	1.11	11	Achubunyor
East Gonja	10,600	63	1.54	4	Bau
Kpandai	48,250	251	1.93	4	Kumbui-Takanado
Kumbungu	13,540	128	1	3	Tonging
Savelugu	46,890	264	1.89	5	Nyeko
North Gonja	13,970	130	1.1	3.5	Kagbal
Total	609,779	4,163	1.66	-	-

Though yields on average were low, the importance of linking households with soybeans to support dietary diversity cannot be overstated. Soybean access provides beneficiary homes the opportunity to incorporate the nutritious bean into their local recipes, which enriches the mainly cereal-based meals of the Northern Region. Although yield data from the 2016 farming season is not yet available, the Agriculture and Livelihoods Team anticipates decent yields after a steady rainy season (results will be available in FY17 Q1)

Despite the low average yields from 2015, some women across the districts recorded impressive results (9, 10 and 11 bags per acre), indicating there are steps that can be taken to improve yields, even in the face of erratic weather patterns. Saboba District recorded superior yields in comparison to other districts, while Central Gonja, Savelugu-Nanton, and Tolon fared the worst (see Table 7). Beneficiaries raised a myriad of factors to explain low yields, such as unmanageable plot size, erratic rainfall, and late delivery of tractor services.

³⁷ Data from North Gonja was unavailable at the time of reporting.

Bright Spots amongst Low Yields



Fulera Abdulai of Sanga in the Sagnarigu District (pictured above with her young daughter) recounted how RING soybean support ensured her son could attend Senior High School. “USAID RING and the District Assembly supported me to farm one acre of soybeans in 2015. With the adoption of good agriculture practices, I harvested five bags. I needed money urgently to pay my son’s fees to go to Tolon Senior High School [and] I sold four bags of my soybeans to meet that need. Without that support, my child could not have gone to senior high school” she explained. She used the remaining bag of soybeans over several months to support family meals, cooking items like *tubani*, soybean koko, and *koosie*.

Fatahia Seidu of Bunglung in Savelugu-Nanton shared with the RING Team how the four bags of soybeans she’d harvested saved her husband’s life. She explained that he became extremely ill and the soybeans were all she had in terms of assets. She sold all four bags to cover the medical bills and her husband made a sound recovery. “Thank God I am not a widow yet,” she said. “My husband is still alive and healthy now.” Had it not been for the soybeans, she would not have been able to cover the costs of the medical treatment. She narrated her story during a group meeting and expressed her thanks to the Assembly and the RING Project.

In an effort to address low yields, the RPCU and Regional Agriculture Department (RAD) hosted a stakeholder review session to analyze soybean yields against weather patterns and other factors. Scientists from Savannah Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) and University for Development Studies (UDS) provided technical inputs into the deliberations. Adhering to proper planting distances, timely weeding, and incorporating organic matter to conserve soil humidity during drought spells has been difficult for women to manage on the large, one-acre plots. As a results of this review, Global Communities RING proposed decreasing the amount of land used for soybeans from an acre per beneficiary to half an acre to ensure that farmers properly maintain their land and apply good agriculture practices, like composting, mulching and cover cropping, which may produce stronger yield results. All 17 MMDAs selected soybean implementation for 2016, with a target of 5,524 women in 170 communities. Despite Global Communities RING recommendation to cultivate only half an acre, all G2G districts opted to support a full acre of soybeans per household, citing cost-benefit challenges with tractor service suppliers, as well as cultural norms of farming at least one acre for each crop.

At the end of the cultivation cycle, upon harvest, beneficiary farmers received training on post-harvest loss management, including improved cleaning and drying techniques. Each household received 3-6 Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) bags with 2,000 bags distributed overall. With improved storage, households managed to keep soybeans well into the lean season of “*June-July*,” providing access to additional food to supplement dwindling maize stocks, as well as cash support should the households opt to sell any grain.

The table below summarizes soybean support to farmers from 2014 to date. Cumulatively, the project has supported 9,930 women to cultivate 8,451 acres of soybeans.

Table 9 Summary of Soybean Support to Date

District	# of Communities				# of Beneficiaries				Total Acres Planted			
	2014	2015	2016	Tot.	2014	2015	2016	Tot.	2014	2015	2016	Tot.
Central Gonja	9	7	5	21	243	201	198	642	243	201	198	642
Chereponi	3	10	17	30	143	244	548	935	143	244	548	935
East Gonja	0	2	9	11	0	63	209	272	0	63	104.5	167.5
East Mamprusi	4	4	9	17	100	149	350	599	100	149	350	599
Gushegu	0	4	13	17	0	100	300	400	0	100	150	250
Karaga	0	6	9	15	0	185	628	813	0	185	306.5	491.5
Kpandai	0	9	19	28	0	251	329	580	0	251	164.5	415.5
Kumbungu	0	4	9	12	0	128	534	662	0	128	267	395
North Gonja	0	2		2	0	130	229	359	0	130	114.5	244.5

District	# of Communities				# of Beneficiaries				Total Acres Planted			
	2014	2015	2016	Tot.	2014	2015	2016	Tot.	2014	2015	2016	Tot.
Nanumba South	7	13	12	32	294	506	587	1387	294	506	384	1184
Nanumba North	5	5	5	15	243	243	250	736	243	243	250	736
Saboba	0	13	31	44	0	239	311	550	0	239	311	550
Sagnarigu	0	4	10	14	0	110	309	419	0	110	154.5	264.5
Savelugu-Nanton	0	6	9	15	0	264	202	466	0	264	202	466
Tamale Metro	0	5	4	9	0	150	155	305	0	150	155	305
Tolon	0	6	5	11	0	270	235	505	0	270	235	505
West Gonja	0	3	4	7	0	150	150	300	0	150	150	300
Total	28	103	170	300	1,023	3,383	5,524	9,930	1,023	3,383	4,045	8,451

Global Communities RING anticipates stronger yields in 2016 for a variety of reasons: rains were more consistent throughout the farming season, AEAs and other district staff have improved the quality and timeliness of their monitoring visits, and consistent coaching given to households on GAP application seems to have positively affected farming performance as well. Timely seed procurement by districts, which had been a challenge in the past, was also improved this year. With backing from the NRCC, Global Communities RING set a procurement deadline at the end of May 2016 for all districts to collect seeds that had been set aside at the Regional Seed Unit. This deadline ensured that all districts had seed on hand for distribution as soon as the rains came. The half-acre plots in subcontracted districts also enabled women to maintain quality of care of their farms, which will ultimately translate into stronger yields.

Manageable Plots = Better Yields?

Testimonies from the Field

In Bau community in the East Gonja District, Madam Sulemana Adijah, who is benefitting from her second year of RING soybean support, mentioned to Global Communities RING and an East Gonja AEA during a joint monitoring visit that she was satisfied with the half-acre support strategy. She articulated the situation perfectly when she stated, *"Last year I did not get a very good harvest from my one acre plot because I could not successfully weed the farm twice as required. My two sons who were helping me left for school at the time the second weeding was due. This year, because the plot is manageable, coupled with the encouragement by the agricultural extension agent, I did the second weeding without any difficulty. I hope to get a better yield than I did last year."*

In Kunkow, also in East Gonja, Madam Abdulai Sakina fully maintained her half-acre plot by herself this year because she felt the size was more manageable. Last year, she was only able to weed portions of her field because she had no labor support. And Madam Magba Ndibigam, in Mile 70 community of Kpandai, said, *"I could not properly manage my one acre soybean plot because it is not my only crop; I have groundnut and maize fields as well. This year however, because the size [was] not beyond my capacity, all three of my plots received sufficient attention [and] I expect good yields"*.

Harvesting is expected to begin in early November and run through December 2016. Districts will focus household training efforts on timely harvesting, cleaning, drying and proper storage in the coming quarter to prevent post-harvest losses. More than 28,000 PICS bags will be distributed to 5,524 beneficiaries in an effort to reduce storage losses. Yield results will be presented in the FY17 Q2 report, due to potential lag time between harvest and district analysis and reporting.

Small Ruminants

Livestock production is a major source of income for farmers in the three northern regions of Ghana. The livestock sub-sector contributes an estimated 7% to the agricultural GDP of Ghana, hence it makes a significant contribution to overall agricultural development. Increased livestock production will increase farmers' incomes, which will, in turn, contribute to poverty reduction. In the Northern Region, livestock serves as 'insurance' for rural households and is commonly referred to by many as "savings on hooves". Livestock are relied on by rural households for their immediate cash needs, for sustenance when food stocks are low during the lean season, and also in times of crop failure and major shocks (sicknesses, death of bread winner etc.).

Recognizing the important role livestock plays in rural household economics, the RING Project promotes small ruminant management among target households as one of the strategies to improve the overall resilience of target beneficiaries.

In FY16, all 17 partner districts identified and planned for the implementation of small ruminants as part of their RING AWP. Nanumba North was the only district among the 17 that was implementing small ruminants for the first time. Overall, 103 RING communities were reached with this activity during the reporting period. Armed with lessons learned, Global Communities RING provided enhanced technical guidance with particular attention to districts³⁸ where significant weaknesses were observed during 2015 implementation.

Table 10 Progress of small ruminant procured by districts in 2016

Districts	# of Communities	# of Beneficiaries	# of Animals Distributed	Total Births Recorded	# of Community Level Mortalities
Central Gonja	4	200	609	N/A	N/A
Chereponi	4	193	536	N/A	N/A
East Gonja	5	123	355	39	49
East Mamprusi	6	230	698	17	57
Gushegu	9	298	507	113	32
Karaga	3	188	599	113	24
Kpandai	4	91	257	29	22
Kumbungu	4	138	402	99	43
Nanumba North	3	150	450	N/A	N/A
Nanumba South	11	280	816	N/A	N/A
North Gonja	11	323	967	N/A	N/A
Saboba	7	178	534	19	30
Sagnarigu	5	140	568	N/A	N/A
Savelugu-Nanton	10	258	758	N/A	N/A
Tamale Metro	5	112	336	100	36
Tolon	8	374	1,121	N/A	N/A
West Gonja	4	150	450	46	47
Total	103	3,426	9,963	575	340

In 2015, the small ruminant activity encountered major challenges with high mortalities at all levels – from procurement, quarantine and at the household level. Steps taken in 2016 to improve the situation included ‘capping’ the small ruminant budget between 15-20% of the districts’ budget ceiling for the year³⁹ to limit challenges associated with procuring too many animals in a short period of time. Another important measure introduced included improving MMDAs’ small ruminant procurement contracts to ensure suppliers were held accountable for the quality of animals they provided to the Assemblies. Under these improved contracts, suppliers were liable for deaths during quarantine (provided the district had managed the quarantine procedures well). Global Communities RING was on hand to provide technical assistance at critical points as well – animal delivery, administration of medication, spot checks during quarantine, distribution attendance, and immediate follow-ups with beneficiary households. Governance Advisors played a key role in ensuring that all districts had procured the necessary ‘support supplies’ (medications, feeding, watchman services, etc.) before the animals arrived. This greatly improved that small ruminant guidelines and best practices were followed during implementation. Global Communities RING also provided guidance for all districts to complete procurement and distribution by early August which further contributed to the low mortalities noted below, and overall improvement of the activity in 2016.

³⁸ Chereponi, East Gonja, Gushegu, Kumbungu and North Gonja.

³⁹ This cap was based on performance during the previous year – only two districts received the 20% mark (Tolon and West Gonja), while the rest were limited to 15%.

As a result, 9,963 small ruminants were procured and distributed to 3,426 RING beneficiary women in 17 districts. Sheep was the preferred animal, though Sagnarigu District selected goats for preferred technical reasons – higher birth rates (more frequent and with multiple kids per pregnancy), high demands and easier sales in the markets. The number of households reached (3,426) under the small ruminant activity increased by more than 90% from 2015. The dexterity with which the districts carried out this intervention and the technical support provided by Global Communities RING resulted in less than 1% mortalities at the quarantine level. The suppliers replaced all animals that died in quarantine. In comparison with the 25% mortality with no replacement mechanism reported in 2015, this year’s results have improved substantially. Ensuring that healthy animals are delivered to households will result in larger flocks over time and ensure the overall success of this activity.

Four months after distribution, performance data presented by nine districts indicate 575 births and 340 mortalities, demonstrating a 3.2% growth rate from the 9,963 procured this year alone. District staff and the Global Communities RING Technical Team continue to support improved household management of the animals, to increase positive growth and reduce mortalities.

During the reporting period, 17 districts trained 251 (21 women and 230 men) as Community Livestock Workers (CLWs) to support the small ruminant activities at the community level. CLWs currently support livestock beneficiary households with the provision of basic medical care, as well as aid the district in collecting data on animal performance. All trained CLWs have been equipped with tool kits and bicycles to facilitate their work. To date, all CLWs are satisfied with their supportive roles in the various communities. Honorable Nantogmah Zakaria (Assemblyman) and his wife Fatima Salifu are CLWs from Gbulahagu in Tolon District. He noted the following about their roles: *“We are happy with the voluntary service we are providing to our community because the support we give is contributing to keeping the animals healthy. These will make our people have their ruminants multiply so we can all come out of poverty; that they can sell some to take care of their children’s health, education and other needs. Our role as CLWs has helped to build trust between us and the community and we have also gained some skills in taking good care of our own animals.”*

Though many CLWs see their role as vital to the success of the intervention, it is not without its difficulties. Yahaya Issahaku of Sorugu in Sagnarigu District described his role as challenging because other community members who did not benefit from small ruminants blame him for not including them despite several sensitization sessions on the household selection criteria conducted at the onset of the project.

Table 11 Cumulative Small Ruminant Performance

District	# of communities	# of beneficiaries	# of animals supplied	# of lambs	# of community level mortalities	# of animals sold	Current status
Central Gonja	14	700	2,359	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,359
Chereponi	12	516	1592	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,592
East Gonja	8	251	654	182	217	0	619
East Mamprusi	21	730	2,439	1228	1150	38	2,479
Gushegu	18	332	990	264	174	0	1,080
Karaga	5	308	949	113	24	0	1,038
Kpandai	13	211	623	32	22	0	633
Kumbungu	9	274	802	280	141	1	940
Nanumba North	15	150	450	N/A	N/A	N/A	450

Nanumba South	30	1044	3,229	1051	1409	154	2,717
North Gonja	3	323	967	N/A	N/A	N/A	967
Saboba	51	866	2,648	301	167	146	2,636
Sagnarigu	9	222	850	N/A	N/A	N/A	850
Savelugu-Nanton	18	508	1464	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,464
Tamale Metro	10	266	1106	488	250	4	1,340
Tolon	16	660	1977	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,977
West Gonja	9	299	1195	390	322	0	1,263
Total	261	7,660	24,294	4,329	3,876	343	24,404

From 2014 to date, 17 RING MMDAs have procured a total of 24,294 small ruminants distributed to 7,660 beneficiaries in 261 communities. This represents an average of 3 animals per beneficiary. The table above provides a breakdown of cumulative performance of the animals by district. The number of animals available (current status) at the close of FY16 is 24,404 animals. This does not reflect the full picture of animal performance because seven districts (as noted in the table above) could not complete monitoring visits in time to provide updated data. This will be reported in Q1 of FY17. Although some high mortality rates have been reported in some districts, high birth rates have also been recorded. During the year, some households sold some of their small ruminants to meet their needs, mainly during the lean season as confirmed during interactions with beneficiaries. From the data received so far, Global Communities RING has noted that 99% of the sales were carried out in districts that began implementation in 2014. It is refreshing to note that beneficiaries recognize the role of the small ruminant activities in their livelihood improvement. As animals multiply, sales are expected to increase, providing cushion to these vulnerable women and their families and contributing to income smoothing throughout the year.



Photo 6 RING small ruminant beneficiary, Yawah Musah, providing supplementary feed to her sheep in Gbulahigu (Tolon District)

Beneficiaries who sold their animals reported that they used the profit to buy food for their families and pay for educational items (uniforms, books, school fees) and medical bills. An estimated GHs 68,600 was generated by the households who sold the 343 animals. Yawah Musah of Gbulahagu in Tolon is one of the beneficiaries who sold one sheep to meet her urgent cash need. *“Since I received the three ruminants from the District Assembly/USAID RING about 2 years ago, I have not recorded any death. My husband and the CLWs supported me to take good care of them, and they increased in number (reproduced) to nine. About two weeks ago, I*

needed money to buy a uniform, books and sandals for my son to go to school, so I sold one of the ruminants (a young ram) at GHS100 to buy the items for him to go. So now, I have eight sheep.”

In 2016, Global Communities RING directly procured small ruminants for three subcontracted districts (Chereponi, Gushegu and North Gonja). This was partly to ensure households received quality animals and also to demonstrate best practices to these districts that struggled with the implementation of this activity in 2015. Ultimately, Global Communities RING procured 832 small ruminants and distributed them to 293 beneficiaries in the three districts. The intervention was successful, as there were no mortalities recorded and all beneficiaries received healthy

sheep at an ideal time of the year. Additionally, the level of engagement of the ten CLWs (9 men and 1 woman) trained during this intervention were reportedly better in comparison to other CLWs as they report regularly and conduct supportive household visits to beneficiaries in each of the communities.



Photo 7 Small ruminant distribution in Gushegu as part of Global Communities Top Up Support strategy to districts.

Based on this intervention, the Agriculture and Livelihoods Team has determined that proper care (feeding and water) at the quarantine level contributes significantly to reducing mortalities. This can be achieved in each district by engaging committed people to manage the process. The team also observed that quarantine groups should not exceed 220 animals to ensure that each animal can be looked after properly and the risks of overcrowding in the quarantine unit are reduced.

Shea Collection and Market Linkages

Table 12 Summary of Shea Collection and Sales to Date

District	# of communities		# of beneficiaries			# of women trained	# of Bags Collected	# of Bags Sold to GSA Buyers ⁴⁰	Sale Value (GHs)
	2015	2016	2015	2016	Total				
East Gonja	N/A	7	N/A	263	263	263	84.5	-	-
West Gonja	N/A	3	N/A	100	100	100	-	-	-
Savelugu-Nanton	N/A	13	N/A	354	354	354	135	-	-
Central Gonja	5	5	-	378	378	378	73	-	-
North Gonja	2	3	165	143	308	308	-	-	-
Gushegu	N/A	2	N/A	56	56	56	30	-	-
Karaga	N/A	5	N/A	100	100	100	133	-	-
Nanumba North	12	20	368	930	1298	1,298	1531	702	70,200
East Mamprusi	5	8	125	320	445	445	592	283	25,470
Total	24	66	658	2,644	3,302	3,302	2,578.5	985	95,670

Nine MMDAs⁴¹ implemented shea activities in 2016 with technical support from Global Communities RING on group formation, training and monitoring. It is part of the RING support strategy for shea collector groups to provide basic tools and personal protective equipment to safeguard the health and safety of vulnerable women during the collection process. A total of 2,644 new beneficiaries in 66 communities were supported with inputs – basins, boots, gloves, jute sacks, and weighing scales – to aid their collection.

⁴⁰ In some cases, women have collected bags, but the intended sales have not yet been completed. This table will be updated in the FY17 Q1 report.

⁴¹ Central Gonja, Savelugu-Nanton, East Mamprusi, Karaga, Gushegu, West Gonja, Kpandai, East Gonja and Nanumba North.

During the reporting period, Global Communities RING linked Shea Network Ghana (SNG) trainers to implementing districts for support with training on quality nut processing. SNG conducted a TOT for officers from East Gonja, Nanumba North and East Mamprusi, which enabled those officers to then carry out community level trainings for target households. Best practices include parboiling, nut cracking techniques, drying techniques and proper storage practices. The application of these best practices improves the quality of nuts and makes the communities' aggregated product more attractive for larger end-buyers. In total, 3,302 women comprising 2015 and 2016 beneficiaries were trained on best practices of shea nut collection and processing in the nine districts. More than half of the women mentioned during the training that they have never received any training in this area and were previously unaware of the impact it had on the market value of the nut. Madam Dora Torwiseh, the managing director of Nuts for Growth (N4G) confirmed that shea procured from East Mamprusi RING groups were of superior quality. She noted that she wished the groups had actually procured even more nuts for N4G to purchase.

These women collected 2,579 bags (about 226.9MT) valued at an estimated price of GHs 238,511. However, more than 80% of the total dried nuts collected came from Nanumba North and East Mamprusi Districts with no dried nuts collected by women in West Gonja in 2016. Nanumba North and East Mamprusi have both learned from two years of implementation that early engagement in the activity ensures women will have the time needed to collect as many bags as possible. Collection also typically increases during the second year once women are more confident that fair buyers are available. The funds gained from the sale of shea nuts will make a significant impact on household income, making additional funds available for seasonal expenditures and support with food purchase during the lean season.

For 2016, Global Communities RING and district officials from Nanumba North and East Mamprusi identified two shea nut buyers (N4G and NEVA Green Company) to procure dried shea nuts from RING beneficiaries. The introduction of a second buyer was aimed at improving competitiveness of buyers and also to handle the increased number of new beneficiaries of the intervention. Based on quantities available and agreements reached by districts, Global Communities RING and the shea nut collector groups, NEVA Green Company was selected by the Nanumba North women's groups while East Mamprusi women selected N4G. Throughout the process, Community Development Officers (CDO), activity focal persons and District Planning Officers were involved to enhance their capacity for future interactions with the private sector. Buyers engaged with both the beneficiaries and the DAs to negotiate prices. Both companies offered above market price and opted to purchase by the kilogram rather than by the 'bowl,' which is a standard measurement, though less exact than by weight.

In East Mamprusi, N4G has so far purchased 283 bags of shea from 49 women in 3 communities for a total amount of GHs 25,470. Some women noted that they had sold portions of their nuts on the open market for far less to supplement their income, but now that they had established the market linkage with a fair and reputable dealer, they would sell to the SNG member in the coming season. In Nanumba North, 702 bags of shea were purchased from 614 women in 14 communities. Procurement is ongoing and NEVA Green Company expects to purchase more than 1,500 bags from the nearly 1,300 women engaged in the 32 communities. This represents more than a 700% increase in both the quantity of shea sold and number of beneficiaries supported in Nanumba North in comparison to the previous year. Both the District Assembly and RING beneficiaries have recognized the value of the shea intervention and it is expected to continue to gain more traction in the district in 2017. More than GHs 70,200 has been paid to 614 RING beneficiary women for the 702 bags procured so far. The final procurement quantities and amount realized will be reported in Q1 of FY17.



Photo 8 Beneficiaries in Somniboma gathering their bags of shea nuts for purchase by officials of NEVA Green Company.

The Impact of Shea Sales
Nanumba North District



Madam Kulebin Gurunja (pictured) from Sunniboma in Nanumba North could not hide her joy after receiving GHs 200 for her two bags of shea. *“I am very grateful that the district assembly has been able to support us with the wellington boots, head pans, gloves and jute sacks to facilitate the picking of the nuts. I am particularly happy with the fact that you have brought the buyers to our community to buy the nuts. This has taken away all the problems associated with sending the nuts to Bimbilla to sell. If I was to take the nuts to Bimbilla to sell, I would have paid for transport and also be at the mercy of the market queens because once you [make the effort of taking] the nuts to the market you are forced to sell and they buy at their own determined price. I would have ended up with less than what I have received today without any suffering.”* Madam Kulebin noted that the arrival of the funds is timely as she has two children in school, one in Savelugu School for the Deaf, and this will support their school fees.

Madam Napoa Nachanbina, who sold 3.5 bags, expressed emotional sentiments at the GHs 350 she received as the funds could not have come at a better time. *“As I speak to you, my family and I have run out of food; all we have left is just a few bowls of maize, which will last two weeks.”* She noted that she planned to buy food for the household immediately as they waited for the harvesting of crops. Any additional funds would be used to support her children in school.

Leafy Green Vegetable Cultivation with Drip Irrigation

Table 13 Progress of drip irrigation installations in implementing districts

District	# of Communities	# of Beneficiaries	# of Drip Kits	Land Coverage (Sq meters)	Vegetables Grown
Central Gonja	4	105	6	4,000	Ayoyo, Alefu
Nanumba South	7	175	7	3,000	Ayoyo, Biraa, Alefu
Tolon	4	70	4	1,750	Ayoyo, Biraa, alefu, tomatoes
Savelugu	3	100	3	1,000	OFSP
Chereponi	2	41	4	750	Ayoyo, Okro, Bira
Sagnarigu	1	25	2	1,000	Beans, Alefu, Ayoyo, Biraa
Kumbungu	3	80	6	3,000	Ayoyo, Biraa
North Gonja	2	80	6	3,000	Ayoyo, Beans, Biraa
East Gonja	1	25	2	1,000	Alefu, Ayoyo, biraa
Kpandai	1	30	2	1,000	Beans, Ayoyo, Bira, Okro

Karaga	2	100	12	6,000	Biraa, Alefu, Ayoyo cowpea
Total	30	831	54	25,500	

Dark leafy green vegetables provide important micronutrients required for nutritional improvement, especially for growing children and women of reproductive age. To ensure year-round access to these foods, RING promotes the production and consumption of traditional leafy green vegetables through the use of small-scale drip irrigation technology. The indigenous vegetables widely consumed in the Northern Region include: ayoyo, biraa, alefu, salinogu, and bean leaf, among others. Given the single rainy season and the semi-arid nature of the region, it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible to access these greens throughout the year, especially in rural markets. The introduction of the gravity-fed drip irrigation systems in selected communities with reliable water access during the dry season have become a proven panacea to the challenge. This intervention was piloted in 2015 and has been scaled up from five districts to eleven in 2016. During the reporting period, Global Communities RING made improvements to the activity with the introduction of manual pumps, which most women described as effective in pumping water into the storage tanks and not requiring expensive fuel for motorized pumps.

The 831 women in 30 communities were able to produce leafy greens during the driest period of the year (late November through to April) with enough produce for household consumption as well as sales. In Kabilpe in the Central Gonja District, the women expressed their excitement for the support received from the Assembly – they felt ‘empowered’ to engage in productive activity, whereas they would have otherwise been engaged in charcoal burning as their source of income. *“It is our responsibility as women to provide these vegetables to prepare meals for our families, but it is not available during the dry season. Now with the drip irrigation technology we are able to grow our ayoyo, biraa, and bean leaf,”* Madam Ayeshetu said. During the dry season, vegetables are incredibly expensive and typically available only in larger markets, such as Tamale and sometimes Buipe, the district capital. Women are satisfied with this intervention because it supplies them with a product they can now utilize daily during the dry season when they would otherwise lack access to the plants. Madam Ayeshetu added that, *“We are grateful for this intervention...[because] in the dry season, it is very difficult to come by ayoyo, biraa, or bean leaves unless you travel to Tamale, which is [far and] normally beyond our means...Now we have this (the drip irrigation kits) and we can continue to harvest year-round.”*

Depending on the start times, some groups were able to harvest vegetables up to ten times (especially ayoyo, which has a shorter maturation period). With a regular water supply, these small plots were often able to support not only household consumption, but also sales within the community. In Tolon District, notably, four plots supported by 146 women were able to raise nearly GHs 1,100 from the sales of the vegetables they produced. In some communities, however, harvests were only sufficient to support household consumption, which was the main driver for the activity.

The table below shows the performance of 40 out of the 54 drip irrigation sites⁴², highlighting the quantities of vegetables harvested, amount consumed, amount sold and number of beneficiaries involved. Monitoring results indicate that among the women, consumption is high and sales are low, meaning that districts successfully sensitized women to understand that home consumption of the dark green vegetables is highly beneficial for the households.

⁴² East Gonja, Nanumba South, North Gonja and Savelugu-Nanton did not provide harvest and sales data.

Table 14 Performance of 40 Drip Irrigation Sites in Seven Districts

District	# of Comm'ties	# of Farmers	# of Drip Kits	Area (m ²)	Buckets Harvested ⁴³ (kg)	Buckets Consumed (kg)	Buckets Sold ⁴⁴ (GHs)	Vegetables Cultivated
Chereponi	2	41	4	1,250	38	12	182	biraa, aleefu
Central Gonja	4	105	6	4000	35	15	140	ayoyo, biraa, aleefu, bean leaves
Karaga	2	100	12	6,000	163	50	791	biraa, aleefu, ayoyo, cowpea
Kpandai	1	30	2	1,000	52	20	224	cowpea leaves, biraa, aleefu, ayoyo
Kumbungu	3	80	6	3,000	110.50	19	640.50	cowpea leaves, biraa, aleefu
North Gonja	2	80	6	3,000	33	8	175	ayoyo, bean leaves, aleefu
Tolon	4	146	4	1,750	197	42	1,085	biraa, aleefu
Total	18	582	40	20,000	628.5	166	3,237.50	-



Photo 9 Harvesting and weighing leafy greens

As the rainy season started, many women suspended drip-based production due to a flooding tendency in the leafy green plot areas. However, Global Communities RING and the AEAs continued to guide women in less flood-prone zones to maintain their drip irrigation systems as a stopgap measure during

drought spells, which are now more common in the project area. During the rainy season, households typically have access to the vegetables and prices are low.

Global Communities RING introduced live fencing in 2016 as a sustainable climate-smart agricultural solution. Live fencing is a common, cost-effective way of protecting plots that are otherwise susceptible to disruption by roaming herds of cattle, goats and sheep as they graze (especially during the dry season, when very little green grasses exist in the northern savannah). A main challenge that rural households face is that live fencing does not establish itself quickly enough to prevent the animals from passing through. To combat this challenge, Global Communities RING has devised an approach of installing local, inexpensive wire fencing (which typically lasts two to three seasons) around the plots, then planting tree seedlings and shrubbery around the perimeter of the fence. Over the course of two years, the plants will be 'trained' to grow around the wire fencing, reinforcing it and extending it past the regular lifespan. At the same time, the wire fence provides the protection the plot needs until the live fencing can establish itself. In addition to protecting the plots from grazing animals, the fencing will improve natural conditions including the micro-climate and soil conditions in the drip gardens. Living fences planted as pilots include moringa, *Euphobia cylindrical*, *Jatropha*, acacia and in some locations *Leucaena*. If successful, RING will scale up this approach in FY17.

⁴³ One bucket equivalent to 3.3kg on average.

⁴⁴ One bucket equivalent to GHs 7 on average.



Photo 11 (above) Ayoyo plants under drip irrigation support in Biegu, Kumbungu

Photo 10 (left) Women harvesting greens in Wovoggu

Drip irrigation has also been identified as one way to sustain the OFSP activity beyond the RING project life span. The decentralized multiplication sites could become locations where vines will be maintained from one production season to the other. RING beneficiaries will be encouraged to maintain the OFSP vines alongside their leafy green vegetables, as the OFSP leaves are nutrient-rich. OFSP vines preservation via drip will be piloted organically in FY17.

Based on results so far, high interest in the activity and its contribution towards improving consistent consumption of leafy green vegetables by target populations, Global Communities RING has decided to scale it up in FY17. Data of RING communities with year-round access to water is currently being analyzed and will form the basis for community targeting in 2017.

Poultry Pilot

Table 15 Summary of Poultry Performance by District

District	# of Communities	# of Women	# of Birds Planned	# of Birds Procured	# of Deaths	Current # of Birds	Type of Bird
Central Gonja	1	50	1,000	-	-	-	Local Fowls
Nanumba South	1	25	300	300	18	282	Day Old Chicks
Savelugu	7	124	1,240	-	-	-	Local Fowls
Tolon	5	250	2,500	1,522	-	-	Local Fowls
West Gonja	3	50	1,250	-	-	-	Day Old Chicks
North Gonja	1	25	300	-	-	-	Day Old Chicks
Total	18	524	6,590	1,822	18	282	-

In an effort to promote both dietary diversification and the inclusion of additional income streams, RING is currently piloting fowl-rearing in six districts – Nanumba South, Tolon, Central Gonja, North Gonja, West Gonja and Savelugu. At the close of the fiscal year, each district was at varying stages of implementation, with Nanumba South furthest along and North Gonja just starting. Districts have planned for a total of 6,590 local and exotic birds to benefit 524 women in 18 communities.



Photo 12 Healthy chicks in the brooding house in Nasamba, Nanumba South in Q3 of FY16

By the end of the year, two districts (Nanumba South and Tolon) had procured and distributed a total of 1,822 birds to beneficiaries, with the rest of the districts preparing for procurement. However, all necessary prerequisites (trainings for households, CLWs and DAD staff, purchase of medications and feed, etc.) have been carried out to facilitate a smooth arrival.

As the activity was new and best practices have not yet emerged, Global Communities RING held a two-day strategic meeting with the districts and Regional Veterinary Officers involved to standardize implementation across the board. During the meeting, the participants discussed their experiences with similar projects, debated pros and cons of implementation

methodology (i.e. collective versus individual breeding, the use of local fowls versus exotics breeds, feeding practices, etc.), and ultimately devised implementation guidelines for the intervention. At the end of the seminar, each district was free to choose one of the following two strategies:

Strategy A) Women working collectively as a group, with only layers to produce eggs. Inputs will be six-week-old layers with a year supply of feeding and medicine. The group can link their poultry activity with an existing VSLA group, or set guidance to eventually evolve into a VSLA. Chicks 4-6 weeks old are preferable because they have already passed the fragile growth stage, whereas the day old chicks could be difficult to manage and sustain.

Strategy B) Women rearing local birds individually in a semi-intensive way, mostly for the consumption of poultry meat to boost nutritional/protein intake. Chickens will be allowed to roam freely for feed and water with little supplementary feeding. Eggs can be a secondary product and manure can be gathered from the coop to support backyard gardening efforts.

The Global Communities RING Team used the strategies developed to guide all the districts in their implementation. Significant progress has been recorded by the Nanumba South team, which has implemented Strategy A thus far with high quality and successfully engaged the 25 women in Nasamba community in the overall management of the activity. After a positive brooding period by the district, the women took over the day-to-day management of their poultry with only periodic checks by District Veterinary Officer. The birds are now 119 days old and are expected to start laying eggs in the next two weeks. Throughout the procurement process, brooding and grower stages, the women only lost 18 birds representing about 6% of the 304 birds procured. The current stock of birds in the poultry house is 286 and they are healthy and feeding well.

The women confirmed during a recent monitoring visit to Nasamba that they expect good results. *“We provide feed, water and adhere to all the technical guidance provided by the veterinary officer and we are waiting patiently for the birds to start laying. The activity is not laborious and we clean the poultry house regularly in turns. The manure is collected which we are using to fertilize our gardens,”* Madam Sualia, one of the group leaders, remarked. The women have been trained under VSLA as well and they have begun meeting regularly with the aim of better managing their egg enterprise.



Photo 13 Madam Sualia feeding the birds in the Nasamba layer house

Based on the results achieved in Nanumba South, Global Communities RING has recommended the group collective model to North Gonja District, which is behind schedule in implementation. West Gonja District, also behind, has opted for management of the birds by individual beneficiary households (Strategy B). In Tolon, progress slowed down after initial high mortalities with the first batch of 600 birds at both the district quarantine pen and after distribution at the community level. The Regional Veterinary Officer and Global Communities RING provided guidance to Tolon on quarantine duration and medication, which enabled the district to resume procurement. Tolon has so far supplied a total of 1,522 local fowls to 201 women in seven communities.⁴⁵ The

local fowls are expected to reproduce and provide beneficiaries with income opportunity from eggs and meat. The same approach is planned by Savelugu-Nanton and Central Gonja Districts.

The Regional Veterinary Officer and Regional Animal Health and Production Officers have offered guidance to District Veterinary Officers in the six MMDAs because it is a new technical area for many of them. Global Communities RING has prioritized technical support to all districts on the poultry pilot activity during the last quarter of the year to accelerate implementation and document lessons learned and best practices. The remaining four districts are expected to complete the preparatory activities and procure birds early in the coming quarter.

Groundnut Pilot

Groundnut is an important legume crop for smallholder farmers and is widely considered as one of the main women's crops in northern Ghana. It is one of the major cash crops for many households and is a nutritious food rich in protein, oil and micronutrients, such as iron and zinc, which contributes to improved health of the rural population. The plant itself also contributes to soil fertility with biological nitrogen fixation and its haulm is a good source of animal feed. However, poor pre- and post-harvest management exposes the nut to aflatoxins, which can have a detrimental effect on the development of young children.

Eight of the 17 MMDAs piloted groundnuts in 2016, with 895 women targeted for support. To address the critical nutritional challenges with groundnuts-aflatoxins, Global Communities RING collaborated with USAID/SPRING to deliver comprehensive training in the cultivation of groundnuts with an emphasis on both pre- and post-harvest prevention/management of aflatoxin infestation.

To ensure that quality seeds were procured for good germination, RING collaborated with the USAID/Groundnut Scaling project, which facilitated linkages with certified groundnut seed dealers in the Northern Region. This enabled districts to have access to large quantities of quality groundnut seeds (15.72MT). Women visited during supportive monitoring confirmed to Global Communities RING exceptional germination rates. In addition to timely training, all women were supported with basic farming tools (hoes, cutlasses), as well personal protective equipment (gloves and Wellington boots) to ensure the health and safety of the women.

⁴⁵ Dalinbihi, Tolon-Vawagri, Tibogu, Cheshegu, Yapalsi, Waribogu-Kamonayili, and Naha.

As noted above in the soybean section, groundnuts also underwent a last-minute adjustment from the full-acre to half-acre approach in subcontracted districts. Kpandai District also saw numerous women incorporate soil improvement techniques into their groundnut cultivation, with eight women opting for a cereal-legume intercrop and another eight women adopting both intercropping with legumes and using leguminous cover crops. Madam Yajasen Ponaboi, who harvested 140kg of maize and three bags of unshelled groundnuts from her half-acre plot was amazed at the results and indicated she would continue this approach because of the great pay-off. Based on the good results of both crops (groundnuts and maize), the other women who did implement the legume intercrop expressed interest to adopt the same strategy next year.

By the end of FY16, groundnut beneficiaries were at various stages of harvesting. Preliminary results confirmed that women are satisfied with their yields. The district agricultural teams are currently supporting beneficiaries on proper drying and storage techniques using the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) bags technology. The Global Communities RING Technical Team is conducting joint monitoring visits with AEAs to help women reduce post-harvest challenges with aflatoxins and groundnuts. Yield results will be presented in the FY17 Q1 report.

Table 16 Summary of Groundnut Pilot Coverage in 2016

District	# of Communities	# of Beneficiaries	Total Acres Planted
Central Gonja	1	50	50
Karaga	7	109	109
Kpandai	4	108	108
Kumbungu	4	142	142
North Gonja	4	140	70
Savelugu-Nanton	5	56	56
Tolon	4	150	150
West Gonja	6	140	140
Total	35	895	825

Soil Improvement Efforts

Table 17 Summary of Soil Improvement Coverage in 2016

District	# of communities	# of beneficiaries	Total Hectares Planted	# of Inputs received		
				Mucuna (kg)	Pigeon Pea (kg)	OFSP (vines)
Central Gonja	2	51	15	24	52	27,555
Nanumba South	1	25	8.25	12	27	13,778
Kpandai	1	30	10	12	27	13,778
Saboba	3	85	27.25	36	79	41,334
Karaga	2	56	18	24	52	27,555
Total	9	247	78.5	108	237	124,000

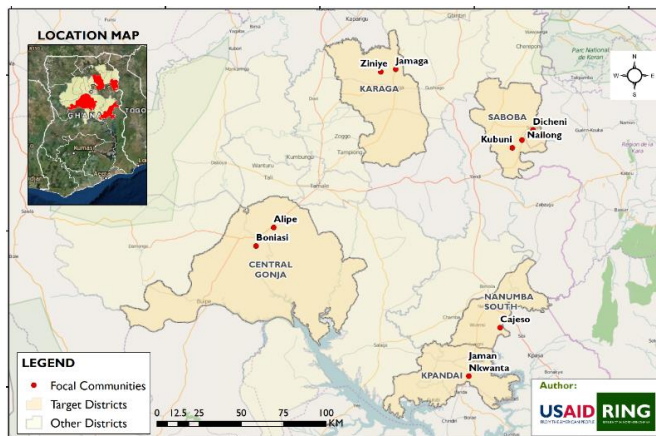


Figure 3 Soil Improvement Site Map

Global Communities RING selected nine communities in five districts (Nanumba North, Saboba, Central Gonja, Karaga, and Kpandai Districts) to pilot inexpensive, easy-to-adopt, proven practices for soil improvement among target households. The pilot focused on introducing three types of cover crops associated with conservation agriculture practices – two leguminous crops (mucuna and pigeon peas) and one tuber (OFSP) – into 247 beneficiary farms. The different technical itineraries co-designed with beneficiaries were low-input and based on the local availability of materials. The strategy

adopted was to have the beneficiaries plant their main crop (typically maize or groundnuts) with pigeon pea intercropped three weeks after germination. The third mucuna cover crop is introduced four weeks after planting the pigeon pea to ensure all plants have time to fully establish themselves before the aggressive plant takes over. Performance so far has been encouraging and beneficiaries are already noticing some benefits. One woman from the Zinyee pilot site in Karaga District expressed her interest in repeating the practice on her own field. She explained, *“I will do [this] next year in my own farm. It is better when the (pigeon pea) is there because the soil has been moist all the time, even without rain for a number of days; also we can harvest pigeon pea for our home consumption after the maize.”*

Global Communities RING also promoted climate adaptation farming techniques through the use of: leguminous crops and cover crops (pigeon peas, mucuna, soybeans, and groundnuts); minimum tillage, use of organic manure (livestock droppings); and natural conservation of crop biomass for organic matter to improve soils. All target beneficiaries and AEAs were trained on the main principles of conservation agriculture, which include minimum soil disturbance, cover crops, multifunctional cropping, as well as tree association for agroforestry systems. The high prioritization on the need to combat bush fires in communities led to the formation of nine local watchdog committees in four of the five districts.



Photo 14 Maize-Pigeon pea intercrop at various stages of growth, Zinyee in Karaga

Afforestation efforts within the targeted communities saw the distribution of 13,070 tree seedlings (*Leucaena*, *Cassia*, papaya, moringa) for planting in beneficiary plots and also around drip sites in seven districts to support live fencing efforts. Overall, 272 women benefitted.

In collaboration with the USAID/Agricultural Technology Transfer (ATT) project, Global Communities RING distributed a total of 108 kilograms of mucuna and 237kg of pigeon pea to the target beneficiaries. Also, 124,000 OFSP vines were planted in both the intercrop plots and

on soil improvement sites. OFSP is strategically incorporated to provide the necessary ground cover to improve microbial activities in the soil, as well as demonstrate its capacity as a climate-smart crop.

Though harvesting is not yet completed beneficiaries have noted a remarkable change in the physiological appearance in the plants in comparison to their other fields, despite the fact that fertilizer was not applied. In Nanumba South's Kajeso, 25 women undertook manure application as a soil improvement method on their maize-pigeon pea and mucuna plot. They have noted that the demonstration plot looks much healthier than their other farms.

The results from the field look impressive as the maize is now fully mature and the cover crops are well-established. Global Communities RING is hopeful the pilot results in Kajeso will influence the women's future practices and overall adoption of soil improvement techniques. This could be a model plot for the Nanumba South agriculture team to demonstrate soil improvement to other farmers. Similar positive results have been noted on the Kpandai groundnut-maize intercrop plot, with women indicating they will take up the promoted practices on their own farms next year.

In Dicheeni (Saboba), the maize-mucuna intercrop saw mixed results. The mucuna actually performed so well that it might have taken over the maize. Though there are challenges with plant competition, the mucuna formed significant biomass and has covered the entire field. This will leave large amount of organic matter, improving the soil's microorganism activity for the subsequent year's farming. Global Communities RING and district staff noted similar aggressiveness of mucuna at a pigeon pea-mucuna intercrop site in Jamanga (Karaga District). The mucuna covered the pigeon peas, suppressing the growth and development of the plant. This is an important lesson which will be used in finalizing the soybean and groundnut half-acre soil improvement strategies for 2017. In FY17 Q1, Global Communities RING will monitor the harvesting of the pilot soil improvement plots and develop final recommendations based on the results.

Regional Agriculture Department Engagement

The Regional Agriculture Department (RAD) had a slow start with the implementation of their 2016 work plan activities. Global Communities RING witnessed communication challenges between the RAD and the RPCU, which may have contributed to the delay, and, together with USAID, the team is working to improve the situation. Despite these challenges, RAD



Photo 15 Maize applied with animal manure and intercropped with leguminous cover crop, Kajeso in Nanumba South district



Photo 16 Mucuna demonstration field in Dicheeni, Saboba District

implemented trainings on integrated pest management and biosecurity with small ruminants and poultry, and conducted technical supportive monitoring visits to RING districts. The field monitoring visits were specifically undertaken to observe small ruminant and soybean performance. Global Communities RING will continue to regularly liaise with RAD to ensure they have the necessary information to provide timely technical guidance to their decentralized district counterparts.

Other Partnerships and Collaborations

During the reporting period, Global Communities RING continued the partnership with several USAID Implementing Partners, local institutions and agencies in addition to the 17 MMDAs. The USAID Soybean Innovation Lab (SIL) continued to provide technical support to RING on soybean activities, with the thresher pilot as just one example. Two soybean threshers (one manual and one motorized) will be delivered to two RING communities in Saboba and Tolon in FY17 Q1 as part of this joint effort. Global Communities RING expects valuable lessons learned from the exercise, which will support both projects in various areas connected to soybean cultivation. For Global Communities RING, the thresher provides an important piece of the 'improved grain storage' value chain, as it reduces waste and ensures that the beans are extracted in a more hygienic and less labor-intensive manner. In addition to the thresher pilot, USAID/SIL organized several information sharing events in which Global Communities RING participated.

UDS and the Savannah Agricultural Research Institute continue to partner with RING on the production and management of OFSP vines. The USAID/ATT project collaborated with RING on the soil improvement pilot and towards the scale up of the OFSP. RING collaborated with USAID/SPRING to scale up the OFSPs, VSLA coverage, and aflatoxin reduction on groundnuts. Finally, RING collaborated with USAID/Groundnut Scaling project to secure reliable good quality seeds to partner districts to facilitate the groundnut activity implementation.

Shifts in Project Implementation

Realignment of Cage Fishing Activities and Removal from RING Menu

During the reporting period, the Global Communities RING technical team encountered an unforeseen challenge with the cage fishing intervention pilot. In Nanumba South, just before harvesting was scheduled to take place, all of the tilapia (representing approximately GHs 65,000) the women had worked to raise since the fingerling stage disappeared. Upon further investigation, theft seemed likely as the cage was submerged in water along the riverside with insufficient security. In East Gonja District, a heavy windstorm reportedly turned the cage over, releasing the majority of the fingerlings from the cage.

Given both of these challenges and no clear way to prevent the issues, USAID, the region, and Global Communities RING made the joint decision to halt the activity and remove it from the RING menu. Overall, the activity was expensive to start-up, and though the profits seemed lucrative enough to warrant the effort, the risks proved too great. Upon making the decision, Global Communities RING supported both Nanumba South and East Gonja to realign remaining budget items to other activities they had successfully implemented.

Implementation of the Half-Acre Plot

Over the course of the year, Global Communities RING negotiated a revision to the soybean cultivation approach within subcontracted districts' work plans to support a pilot effort of the half-acre plot model.

This approach was introduced as a result of two years of consistent poor harvests under the soybean intervention. Though rains have been erratic, soil quality in the north is poor, which means farmers must take additional steps to improve the soil, as well as conduct timely weeding and apply other management techniques. Anecdotal reports indicated that most women did not have the time to carry out timely and proper weeding, which compounded the negative effect of the rain patterns. Reducing the size of the plot to a half-acre would ideally result in improvements in the yield, soil management, crop sanitation and general maintenance of farms. Though districts resisted the idea at first – citing operational challenges of securing tractors to plow half-acre plots – Global Communities RING proposed recommendations to include pairing women and block plowing one acre in communities where land is easily accessible. After a consensus was reached, the subcontracted districts planned to double the number of farmers and maintain the number of acres to be plowed whereby two farmers will share each plowed acre. The DADs are looking forward to compare yield results between the shared and the non-shared acres.

Funding Mechanism Shift from G2G to subcontract for Chereponi District

As a result of significant issues discovered with the small ruminant implementation under their 2015 RING work plan, USAID, the NRCC, and Global Communities RING made the decision to shift Chereponi District from government-to-government to the subcontracted funding mechanism. This adjustment allowed Global Communities RING to provide enhanced technical assistance and supportive oversight in the management of activity implementation and funds disbursement.

4.2. Component Two

Component 2a – Nutrition

Increased adoption of positive nutrition behaviors among target households

FY16 marked substantial advancement in RING’s nutrition activities. Several activities were implemented for the first time, including the rollout out of the Logistics Management of Nutrition Commodities training curriculum, the introduction of anemia prevention and control activities using HemoCue® devices for testing and new Ghana Health Services (GHS) materials, the rollout of the Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (CIYCF) training package for health workers (HW) and community health volunteers (CHV), the initiation of facility-level quality improvement (QI) processes, the airing of a radio campaign serial drama on IYCF, and the building of cadres of facilitators to screen a stunting advocacy video. RING districts also continued to conduct community nutrition durbars, cooking demonstrations, community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) activities, nutrition trainings for non-health sector staff, CHPS strengthening, and monitoring and supervision of health services and activities. Strong coordination and collaboration with the NRHD, USAID IPs, and UNICEF was a priority for Global Communities RING throughout the year and contributed to the success of district activity implementation. The descriptions below present a detailed summary of the FY16 achievements in Component 2a.

Logistics Management of Nutrition Commodities

Global Communities RING, in collaboration with the USAID | DELIVER Project and the NRHD, helped ten districts⁴⁶ improve their logistical management of nutrition commodities. In Q2 of FY16, Global Communities RING trained 38 district-level staff (District Nutrition Officers [DNOs],

⁴⁶ SPRING/Ghana conducted this training in the seven SPRING-RING “overlap” districts.

Public Health Nurses, Pharmacists, and Storekeepers⁴⁷) from the ten districts as trainers who, in turn, trained 245 district-level health workers on how to manage nutrition commodities in line with the principles guiding the Ghana Health System to provide more effective and efficient services (see Table 18). These trainings developed the officers' and health workers' abilities to describe 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.

Table 18 Summary of Logistics Management of Nutrition Commodity Training by District

Districts	# of district staff trained as trainers			# of health workers trained on logistics management of nutrition commodities		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Chereponi	1	3	4	4	15	19
Kpandai	0	4	4	9	15	24
Nanumba North	0	3	3	9	16	25
Nanumba South	1	3	4	5	19	24
North Gonja	0	3	3	5	20	25
Saboba	1	3	4	10	15	25
Sagnarigu	3	1	4	19	6	25
Savelugu-Nanton	1	3	4	23	3	26
Tamale Metro	2	2	4	17	10	27
West Gonja	0	4	4	11	14	25
Total	9	29	38	112	133	245

To measure the effectiveness of the trainings, Global Communities RING carried out a pre-training assessment in six randomly selected facilities in three districts (one CHPS and one Health Center each in Chereponi, Sagnarigu, and Savelugu-Nanton), and repeated the survey in six randomly selected facilities (one CHPS and one Health Center) in the same three districts between five and six months after the training to monitor changes in commodity management implementation related to reporting, requisitioning, and storage conditions. The assessment results showed some improvements in facility-level performance before and after the training and highlighted the need for further improvements (see Table 19). The frequency that health facilities reported on nutrition commodity usage and had reports available at the time of the assessment visit was strong both before and after the training. Knowledge on logistics management principles, such as maximum and minimum reorder levels, increased. However, storage conditions remained an issue with only slight improvement after the training.

Table 19 Key Findings from Logistics Management Pre- and Post-Assessment

Criteria	# of Health Facilities	
	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Routinely reported on nutrition commodity usage	6 (100%)	6 (100%)
Had reports on nutrition commodity usage from the previous three months available at the time of visit	6 (100%)	6 (100%)
Knowledge of established maximum and minimum reorder levels	0 (0%)	5 (83%)

⁴⁷ These four cadres of personnel were invited to the ToT. However, in some cases where districts don't have these professionals on staff, or the person was not suitable or available to participate, other competent DHA staff involved in commodity management were invited to the ToT, such as community health nurses, nurse practitioners, and disease control officers.

Conducted an inventory count in the previous six months	3 (50%)	5 (83%)
Storage conditions considered “excellent”	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Storage conditions considered “acceptable”	2 (33%)	3 (50%)
Storage conditions considered “unacceptable”	4 (67%)	3 (50%)

RING’s monitoring efforts at the facilities and conversations with district-level staff point to constraints on effective implementation, notably the absence of the RRIRV which is reportedly undergoing revisions at the national-level. As a result, in FY17 Global Communities RING will focus on on-the-job training, specifically on improving storage conditions and the use of bin cards to improve commodity management.

Anemia Prevention and Control

RING made strides forward on the project’s anemia agenda in FY16 by providing logistical and technical assistance to districts to build a cadre of district-level trainers in the new GHS anemia training package, and to train health workers on the use of HemoCue® devices. In Q4, Global Communities RING, in collaboration with the NRHD and SPRING/Ghana, trained 23 district-level trainers from five districts⁴⁸ (Chereponi, Nanumba North, Nanumba South, Tamale Metro, and West Gonja) on the new GHS anemia training package. These district-level trainers will cascade the training down to health workers and CHVs in their districts in FY17 Q1. While districts waited for the new GHS anemia training package during quarters 2, 3, and 4 of FY16, Global Communities RING supported six districts⁴⁹ (Chereponi, Nanumba North, Nanumba South, Savelugu-Nanton, Tamale Metro, and West Gonja) to train 156 health workers on the use of the HemoCue® devices to measure hemoglobin and assess anemia (see Table 20).



Photo 17 Garizegu CHPS in Sagnarigu appropriately tracked RUTF supply using an inventory control card (left) and supplementary food was stored on the ground at Pigu CHPS in Savelugu-Nanton where it was susceptible to rodents (right).

Table 20 Summary of HemoCue® Training by District

Districts	# of district staff trained as trainers on anemia training package			# of health workers trained on HemoCue® use		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Chereponi	0	4	4	8	14	22
Nanumba North	0	5	5	14	11	25
Nanumba South	0	5	5	11	15	26
Savelugu	0	0	0	16	16	32
Tamale Metro	3	2	5	19	7	26
West Gonja	1	3	4	15	10	25
Total	4	19	23	83	73	156

⁴⁸ SPRING/Ghana supported the training of district-level trainers in FY16 Q4 in the following “overlap” districts: Central Gonja, East Gonja, Gushegu, Karaga, Kumbungu, and Tolon. In FY17 Q1, SPRING/Ghana will train district level trainers from East Mamprusi, and RING will train district-level trainers from the remaining six targeted districts: Chereponi, Kpandai, North Gonja, Saboba, Sagnarigu, and Savelugu-Nanton. Therefore, all 17 RING districts will complete district-level TOTs on the new GHS anemia packaged supported by either RING or SPRING/Ghana by FY17 Q1.

⁴⁹ SPRING/Ghana supported the training of health workers on the use of the HemoCue® device in Central Gonja, East Gonja, East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga, Kumbungu, and Tolon. Global Communities RING did not target training of health workers in Kpandai, North Gonja, and Sagnarigu because the districts are waiting for HemoCue® devices and microcuvettes to be procured by S4H.

Thirteen of the seventeen RING districts received HemoCue® devices in FY16. Global Communities RING obtained DHIMS 2 data for April – June 2015 (before districts received HemoCue® devices) and for April – June 2016 (after districts received HemoCue® devices) in order to compare anemia testing among pregnant women at antenatal care (ANC) registration and at 36 weeks. Among the thirteen RING districts that received HemoCue® devices, eleven increased their rates of anemia testing at ANC registration between April – June 2015 and April – June 2016 (highlighted in green in Table 21). Notably, the rate of testing pregnant women for anemia at ANC registration in Saboba increased from 4.5% to 23.0%. Three of the four districts that did not receive HemoCue® devices saw a decrease in the percentage of women tested for anemia at ANC registration between the two points in time⁵⁰. Among the thirteen RING districts that received HemoCue® devices, eleven increased their rates of anemia testing of pregnant women at 36 weeks (highlighted in green in Table 21). However, the rate of anemia testing at 36 weeks was low across all districts and dropped off significantly from the rate of testing at ANC registration (see Table 21). Global Communities RING anticipates that the anemia testing rates of pregnant women during ANC registration and at 36 weeks will increase further following the anemia health worker trainings scheduled to begin in FY17 Q1. The uptake in testing to date underscores the need for a procurement mechanism for microcuvettes. In FY17, Global Communities RING will also test the hypothesis that testing for anemia at lower level facilities using the HemoCue® devices affects anemia treatment and anemia status.

Table 21 Percentage of Women Tested for Anemia at ANC Registration and 36 Weeks at Two Points in Time (Note: green indicates increased testing rate between points in time; red indicates decreased testing rate between points in time)

District	District Has HemoCue Device (Y/N)	Apr. – Jun. 2015	Apr. – Jun. 2016	Apr. – Jun. 2015	Apr. – Jun. 2016
		% of Hb Checked at ANC Registration (Before Receiving HemoCue Device®)	% of Hb Checked at ANC Registration (After Receiving HemoCue Device®)	% of Hb Checked at 36 Weeks (Before Receiving HemoCue Device®)	% of Hb Checked at 36 Weeks (After Receiving HemoCue Device®)
Central Gonja	Y	5.4	19.96	3.1	4.55
Chereponi	Y	26.4	27.81	23.9	14.87
East Gonja	Y	17.2	13.95	8.1	6.87
East Mamprusi	Y	26.1	34.23	9.3	10.77
Gushegu	Y	3.4	16.01	0.0	2.88
Karaga	Y	12.8	17.86	3.0	5.15
Kpandai	N	8.2	10.78	2.1	3.17
Kumbungu	Y	24.6	34.11	8.4	9.85
Nanumba North	Y	18.2	24.68	4.9	10.03
Nanumba South	Y	2.7	18.86	0.7	4.55
North Gonja	N	13.2	12.04	1.0	1.40
Saboba	Y	4.5	23.01	0.8	2.15
Sagnarigu	N	18.7	18.13	6.8	5.72
Savelugu-Nanton	N	17.6	17.07	6.3	6.49
Tamale	Y	44.3	55.75	24.5	27.87
Tolon	Y	7.1	19.13	1.7	6.40
West Gonja	Y	15.6	13.50	5.2	6.39

Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition

Prevention of malnutrition is a priority for RING, but when severe acute malnutrition (SAM) cases arise, CHVs must be equipped to identify and refer cases to health facilities, and health facilities must be equipped with a competent work force, tools, and commodities to manage the cases. To build capacity in these areas, in FY16 seven districts completed trainings in CMAM, with 443 CHVs (111 women and 332 men) trained in East Gonja, East Mamprusi, Saboba,

⁵⁰ Kpandai, North Gonja, Sagnarigu, and Savelugu-Nanton have not yet received HemoCue® devices.

Savelugu-Nanton, Tamale Metro, West Gonja; and 83 health workers (39 women and 44 men) trained in East Gonja, Kumbungu, and West Gonja (see Table 22). RING’s monitoring and supervision efforts in all 17 districts further reinforced the implementation of high quality CMAM programs (described further in the monitoring and supervision section below). Training additional health workers and CHVs is a priority for RING in FY17 Q1 as part of the districts’ 2016 AWP.

Table 22 Summary of CMAM Trainings by District

Districts	# of Health Workers Trained in CMAM			# of Community Health Volunteers Trained in CMAM		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
East Gonja	7	24	31	9	17	26
East Mamprusi	0	0	0	33	67	100
Kumbungu	20	7	27	0	0	0
Saboba	0	0	0	17	58	75
Savelugu-Nanton	0	0	0	5	42	47
Tamale Metro	0	0	0	20	78	98
West Gonja	12	13	25	27	70	97
Total	39	44	83	111	332	443

Global Communities RING obtained DHIMS 2 data to assess the performance of CMAM OPC programs in program districts. The performance of CMAM OPC in the districts has been improving marginally in the last three years. In 2014, 11 RING districts performed above average (sphere standard of >75% cure rate), which increased to 13 RING districts in 2015 and as of June 2016 it had increased to 14 RING districts. However, Central Gonja, Nanumba North, and Tamale Metro performed below the sphere standard in 2015 and as of June 2016 (see Table 23). The identification of children with SAM is still a challenge in the Northern Region as shown in the coverage rates presented in Table 24. In 2014, Karaga, Kumbungu, Nanumba North, and Tolon reached almost all SAM children projected for the year with Kumbungu and Tolon exceeding their targets. In 2015, there was an increase among the districts’ coverage rates in all but two districts (Nanumba North and Saboba). However, the 2016 half-year data showed that many districts are not on track to reach their 2016 annual projections. More analysis is required to determine if this was due to the improved nutritional status of children or due to a reduction of identified cases.

Low cure rates and low coverage rates could be attributed to the weaknesses RING has identified during mentoring and coaching visits in FY16: health workers’ weak understanding of the program’s entry and exit criteria, incorrect classification on admission and exit, and inactive case searches. RING’s facility-level mentoring and coaching visits focus on improving these practices. Additionally, RING’s community-level work, such as working with CHVs and conducting nutrition durbars, helps sensitize community members on malnutrition and the CMAM program, and promotes referral and use of facility services.

Table 23 Three-Year Trend of CMAM OPC Cure Rate by Districts

District	Cure Rate		
	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (Jan – Jun) (%)
Central Gonja	Data not available ⁵¹	54.2	72.0
Chereponi	100	86.8	91.7
East Gonja	88.7	100	98.1
East Mamprusi	97.3	96.2	95.6
Gushegu	82.6	86.7	97.9
Karaga	54.9	95.6	100
Kpandai	100	65.2	87.5
Kumbungu	78.6	89.5	78.4
Nanumba North	96.8	63.6	71.0
Nanumba South	100	76.8	91.3
North Gonja	Data not available	82.7	100
Saboba	84.8	93.2	95.0
Sagnarigu	84.5	86.5	95.8
Savelugu-Nanton	71.6	82.2	89.8
Tamale Metro	56.2	69.0	67.0
Tolon	88.7	96.5	98.9
West Gonja	Data not available	87.3	98.0

Table 24 Three-Year Trend of CMAM OPC Coverage by Districts

District	Coverage		
	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (Jan – Jun) (%)
Central Gonja	Data not available	40	17.3
Chereponi	18.8	104.9	34.5
East Gonja	16.6	31.8	16.1
East Mamprusi	68.4	108.5	41.5
Gushegu	53.9	70.8	26.3
Karaga	81.5	85.2	27.8
Kpandai	2.4	22.6	7.0
Kumbungu	134.9	168.5	104.0
Nanumba North	83.3	25.7	10.2
Nanumba South	24.1	39.9	24.0
North Gonja	Data not available	38.5	28.7
Saboba	42.8	36.1	12.2
Sagnarigu	59.1	61.6	17.9
Savelugu-Nanton	19.8	62.9	22.0
Tamale	64.9	82.9	25.7
Tolon	101.9	134.1	23.1
West Gonja	3.2	45.0	35.0

Community Infant and Young Child Feeding

FY16 marked the roll out of the CIYCF counselling package in RING districts. RING's CIYCF trainings focused on 10 districts where RING and SPRING/Ghana do not overlap, or, as in the case of East Mamprusi, on CHVs not reached by SPRING/Ghana's training. Eleven RING districts were trained in CIYCF, with 10 districts training 377 health workers (202 women and 175 men) and 11 districts training 697 CHVs (165 women and 532 men) (see Table 25). Each of RING's CIYCF training sessions for health workers and CHVs included a two-day pre-training session for the facilitators to review the materials, prepare training props, and assign facilitation

⁵¹ The CMAM OPC program was introduced in Central Gonja, North Gonja, and West Gonja in 2014. The districts did not begin fully reporting on CMAM indicators until 2015. The exception is West Gonja, which received training before Central Gonja and North Gonja, and began reporting on selected CMAM indicators in 2014 (e.g. OPC coverage).

roles. DNOs reported that the pre-training added significant value and improved the quality of trainings because facilitators were well-prepared. Facilitators also reported that pre-training was critical in getting acquainted with the CHV training manual, since ten of the eleven districts used the CHV manual for the first time in FY16. The CIYCF training program has shown progress as currently almost all health facilities are routinely providing targeted counselling during CWC and ANC, and recording it in the IYCF register. Health workers, however, are challenged with completely and correctly filling the IYCF registers. Improving IYCF documentation and service delivery is a key component of RING's facility- and community-level mentoring and coaching visits.

Table 25 Summary of CIYCF Training by District

Districts	# of Health Workers Trained in CIYCF			# of Community Health Volunteers Trained in CIYCF		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Saboba	14	11	25	9	41	50
East Mamprusi	0	0	0	37	61	98
Nanumba North	22	25	47	1	68	69
Nanumba South	13	28	41	1	44	45
Chereponi	12	13	25	28	58	86
Kpandai	10	20	30	5	43	48
Tamale Metro ⁵²	21	9	30	18	82	100
West Gonja	27	31	58	19	32	51
North Gonja	16	9	25	6	19	25
Sagnarigu	41	8	49	35	65	100
Savelugu	26	21	47	6	19	25
Total	202	175	377	165	532	697

RING's midline survey in FY17 will cover key IYCF indicators that will assess outcomes of RING's nutrition activities, of which the CIYCF trainings will contribute to. In the meantime, Global Communities RING obtained DHIMS 2 data on the prevalence of underweight children as a proxy to how the CIYCF trainings may have contributed to improved nutrition outcomes. Table 26 shows a marginal decrease in rates of underweight among children under five years in the majority of the RING districts from 2014 to 2016 (half year January to June). Data highlighted in green indicates that a district's prevalence of underweight children decreased between 2015 and 2016 (half-year January to June), data in yellow indicates stagnation, and data in red indicates the prevalence of underweight children increased. In discussions with the NRHD, there are concerns about the quality of the data given that districts experienced a shortage of Child Health Record Books (CHRBs) starting in the last quarter of 2015 through mid-2016. These CHRBs capture the information of weighed children, and without them districts improvised tally books to categorize the nutritional status of weighed children (which could have introduced errors in the classification). In FY16 Q4, Global Communities RING supplied CHRBs to the Northern Region (46,000 copies) and the NRHD printed a growth monitoring and promotion register that included a tally sheet for categorizing the nutritional status of weighed children (as part of the RCC 2016 AWP) which should enhance data quality for this indicator.

⁵² As reported in GC RING's FY16 Q1 report, although Tamale carried out a CIYCF training for health workers during Q1, this training was reportedly carried out two days before the district actually received training materials. When asked how they could conduct the training without materials, the Tamale DNO reported that they used PowerPoint presentations, though they were unable to produce them for retroactive technical review or quality assessment. Given the potential compromise of training quality, Global Communities RING prefers not to include their health workers trained in this report.

Partner in Health Highlight

Community Health Volunteer Supports Caregiver during Child's First 1,000 Days



"My motivation as Community Health Volunteer is the changes that I see in myself, my children and the improvement in the health of women and children in this community as a result of my efforts. If this community is safe from diseases, I will be safe," said Mrs. Sadia Tahiru, a CHV in Kalpohin in the Sagnarigu District.

Mrs. Tahiru has been a CHV for eight years but nearly quit a few years ago because the training failed to provide her with the knowledge necessary to confidently counsel clients. "I was not trained enough... but health workers at Kalpohin HC and clients told me they appreciated my support and it gave me the urge to continue. Now, having received trainings from GHS and RING, I counsel my clients with confidence, including on IYCF and early detection of fever," she explained.

Her work is impacting clients in her community. "Five months ago I visited a household and found a client, Hadija Osman, whose child's birth weight was 1.8 kg. Hadija and the child's father were so worried that their child may not survive. I counseled and assured them that their child will survive and gain his normal weight if they follow my recommendations. They agreed so I prioritized that household and gave close counselling. As days and weeks passed by, Kadija and her husband saw significant improvement in the weight of their child. Today, if you see or hold the child, you will know that he has gained his normal weight and looks much healthier than before" said Mrs. Tahiru.

"I was so worried when I was told my son was underweight after delivery," said Hadija. "When I got home, I was thinking about what to do to ensure I do not lose my son. So when Mrs. Tahiru visited and had a discussion with me on what to do to help my son back to his normal weight, I was a bit reassured. As days and weeks passed, I saw clear improvement in the weight of my son. Now, when I look at him I am delighted and thankful to God for bringing Mrs. Sadia to my house at the right time."

Table 26 Three-Year Trend of Prevalence of Underweight among Children under Five, by District

District	Underweight		
	2014 (%)	2015 (%)	2016 (Half Year January - June) (%)
Central Gonja	12	7.7	11.7
Cheriponi	25.7	23.2	17.1
East Gonja	12	9.6	8.0
East Mamprusi	14.7	9.8	9.6
Gushiegu	16.9	18.3	11.9
Karaga	6.8	6.9	8.0
Kpanadai	17.8	11.0	6.1
Kumbungu	12.2	9.0	6.3
Nanumba North	15.9	8.8	3.8
Nanumba South	19.7	12.6	11.1
North Gonja	7.3	9.0	3.4
Saboba	13.0	10.2	8.3
Sagnarigu	14.9	7.4	5.7
Savelugu-Nanton	11.1	12.6	6.5
Tamale	15.2	9.6	5.7
Tolon	15.6	20.8	20.2
West Gonja	18.6	10.4	7.4

Data Utilization and Outreach Planning

RING trained health workers on data utilization and outreach planning. Sixty-eight health workers (26 women and 42 men) were trained in data utilization across three districts; and 476 health workers (204 women and 272 men) were trained in outreach planning across 13 districts. The objective of the data utilization training was to improve data quality with an emphasis on using nutrition data for management purposes. Additionally, the DNOs coached health workers on how to complete the routine nutrition reporting form that was introduced in August 2015. The objective of the outreach planning training was to increase the frequency and quality of outreach services in districts that receive logistical support from RING (e.g. motorbikes and/or fuel). During the outreach planning trainings, participants were tasked to complete situational analyses of their sub-districts, identify a health challenge that can be addressed at the sub-district level, set objectives, identify activities and strategies to help achieve the set objectives, and plan for how they will monitor and evaluate their efforts. Health workers reported that before the training they did not set objectives for the outreach visits and often conducted several outreaches in a day.

Table 27 Summary of Data Utilization and Outreach Planning Trainings

Districts	Data Utilization (HWs)			Outreach Planning (HWs)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Central Gonja	0	0	0	12	16	28
East Gonja	0	0	0	5	16	21
Nanumba North	9	14	23	18	29	47
Nanumba South	9	16	25	9	16	25
Kpandai	0	0	0	12	15	27
Tamale Metro	0	0	0	21	9	30
Tolon	0	0	0	20	30	50
West Gonja	0	0	0	12	18	30
North Gonja	0	0	0	10	14	24
East Mamprusi	0	0	0	17	26	43
Karaga	0	0	0	19	30	49
Kumbungu	0	0	0	30	12	42
Saboba	8	12	20	19	41	60
Total	26	42	68	204	272	476

Quality Improvement (QI)

RING initiated facility-level QI activities in FY16 in one of two districts that had selected the QI activity in their 2016 AWP. Nanumba South conducted three QI activities during the year: 1) a three-day QI training that built a cadre of district-level QI coaches to help health facilities establish and manage effective QI teams; 2) a three-day QI training for health facility in-charges to build their capacity to establish and manage effective QI teams at their respective health facilities; and 3) a three-day QI team training to build the capacity of newly formed QI teams from health facilities. In total, the district trained five coaches, 11 in-charges, and five QI teams from five health facilities. The district plans to complete the QI team trainings for the remaining four facilities in FY17 Q1 so that all facilities will be conducting QI team meetings by the end of FY17 Q1. In FY17 Q1, RING will also initiate the QI activity in Saboba, starting with the district-level coaches training. Global Communities RING is encouraging more districts to select the facility QI activity in their 2017 AWP, and working with the SPRING/Ghana team to glean their lessons learned from their implementation experience.


Table 28 QI Summary

District	No. Coaches Trained			No. In-Charges Trained			No. of Health Facilities in the District	No of QI teams Trained
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Total	Total
Nanumba South	1	4	5	4	7	11	9	5
Total	1	4	5	4	7	11	9	5

Nutrition-Related Trainings

In FY16, nine districts carried out training for non-health sector staff on Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA). In total, nine districts trained 472 Government of Ghana (GOG) staff (158 women and 314 men) on how to integrate nutrition into their routine work (see Table 29). Based on trends gleaned from monitoring visits in FY15, Global Communities RING revised the ENA training agenda in FY16 to focus on action planning, and developed and printed an ENA brochure with key messages that participants can carry with them to the field. Global Communities RING also modified the implementation strategy for targeting SHEP teachers in the training for GES staff to include head teachers so that there is buy-in from the supervisory level to enact the action plans.

Spotlight
Building Nutrition Champions in WASH Sector



Abdul-Rahman Rabiatu, an Environmental Health Assistant from Sagnarigu District pictured on her motorbike above, was trained in September 2016 on how to integrate nutrition into her routine WASH activities at the district-level. Since the training, Rabiatu has used the knowledge she acquired to educate both women and men in the course of her work. According to Rabiatu, she went on CLTS post-triggering visit to Kpintaliga community. While having a discussion with a natural leader, Afa Amin Yakubu, a child of about 3 years old came to him. “Upon seeing the child, I asked him if that was his child and he said yes. So I told him that looking at the child, I suspect he has some nutritional problem, so he should make time and take him to Taha CHPS for the health workers there to examine him,” said Rabiatu. The father, Afa Amin, agreed to take the child to the CHPS, but because of transportation challenge, he could not send him. Instead he took the child to the CHV in his community, Yussif Abukari, who examined the child, and counseled him on the four star diet. Two weeks later, Bernice Katala, a Community Health Nurse, visited Afa Amin’s household and examined Adam and provided nutritional counseling. She reported that the child had improved.

“The second occasion I applied the knowledge I gained from the training was in Kpinjin community, also during a CLTS post-triggering visit. I entered a natural leader’s house to meet with her and I met several other women in that house. A woman in that house had given birth and the naming ceremony was coming up. So, I went inside to say hello to the woman and met her eating. But looking at the food she was eating, there was no meat. So I used that as an opportunity to educate her and women around on the need to include meat in their diet, especially after giving birth so that she can get enough iron to prevent anemia and to regain her health” said Rabiatu.

Table 29 Summary of ENA Training Participants by District and Designation

District	SHEP			AEA			EHO			CDO & Social Welfare			Total All Sectors
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	
East Gonja	17	28	45	0	14	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	59
East Mamprusi	10	24	34	1	11	12	1	3	4	5	20	25	75
Gushegu	0	0	0	1	11	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Kpandai	12	42	54	1	6	7	1	13	14	0	2	2	77
Kumbungu	13	22	35	4	4	8	11	9	20	0	0	0	63
North Gonja	14	22	36	0	5	5	4	10	14	1	4	5	60
Sagnarigu	0	0	0	3	13	16	15	5	20	2	2	4	40
Savelugu-Nanton	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	8	21	7	8	15	36
West Gonja	22	28	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50
TOTAL	88	166	254	10	64	74	45	48	93	15	36	51	472

Community-Based Mass Media Campaign

During FY16, districts conducted community nutrition durbars that reached nearly 29,000 people (18,063 women and 10,736 men) from 182 communities across 13 districts (see Table 30). Common discussion topics included practices related to exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, consumption of vitamin-A-rich foods, care for sick children, and referring cases of malnutrition. Community durbars are a key way to reach audiences with nutrition messages. This activity remains one of the project's key interventions for directly reaching men and elders, and engaging them in household-level health and nutrition issues. Men accounted for 37% of all participants in the community durbar events. This level of participation is encouraging since men often participate in the decision-making process when allocating household resources and determining family priorities. The Global Communities RING technical team provided support to the DNOs to ensure that durbars were well-planned with an agenda, and interactively engaged community members in nutrition topics.



Photo 18 A mother in Tibung-Kumbungu breastfeeds her baby.

Table 30 Summary of Durbars Conducted by District

Districts	# of Participants (by sex)			# of Communities
	Female	Male	Total	
Central Gonja	1,681	808	2,489	26
Chereponi	245	150	395	5
East Gonja	1,692	1,242	2,934	13
East Mamprusi	3,635	1,200	4,835	13
Gushegu	1,036	706	1,742	11
Karaga	1,714	969	2,683	20
Kpandai	1,198	1,135	2,333	7
Kumbungu	897	662	1,559	8
North Gonja	661	447	1,108	8
Saboba	1,883	983	2,866	32
Savelugu-Nanton	961	368	1,329	15
Tolon	840	770	1,610	8
West Gonja	1,620	1,296	2,916	16

Total	18,063	10,736	28,799	182
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As part of their mass media activities, three districts initiated the dissemination of the stunting advocacy video titled “When a King Has Good Counsellors, His Reign is Peaceful” (developed by SPRING/Ghana). Kpandai, Savelugu-Nanton, and Tamale Metro conducted a two-day orientation to form a cadre of 63 facilitators (21 women and 42 men) from multiple sectors who will screen the video and lead discussions on stunting at the community-level (see Table 31). The objective of the orientation was to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and facilitation skills to use the stunting advocacy video and discussion guide.



Photo 19 Participants in Kpandai prepared their group presentation during the stunting advocacy video training.

Global Communities RING provided technical assistance to districts to conduct the activity and select facilitators who comprised multi-sectoral teams, including staff from GHS, the Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit, the DA, Community Development and Social Welfare, and Ghana Education Service. At each of the orientations, participants formed teams and developed action plans detailing their next steps to disseminate the video at the community-level. The video dissemination will begin in FY17 Q1 along with additional trainings of district-level facilitators in Nanumba North, Nanumba South, North Gonja, Saboba, Sagnarigu, and West Gonja⁵³.

Table 31 Number of Facilitators Trained in Advocacy Video Roll-out

Districts	# of facilitators trained			# of dissemination meetings planned for FY17 Q1
	Female	Male	Total	
Savelugu	9	13	22	5
Tamale Metro	10	11	21	4
Kpandai	2	18	20	4
TOTAL	21	42	63	13

In FY16, Global Communities RING launched radio programming by contracting seven radio stations to air six IYCF episodes developed by SPRING/Ghana for a period of 12 weeks (as detailed below in Table 32). The radio serial drama “The Shrubs of Today Become Tomorrow’s Forest” was designed to educate households on how to feed and care for children for optimal growth and nutrition within their first 1,000 days of life. The airtime coverage areas of the stations engaged by Global Communities RING were geographically complementary to the stations contracted by SPRING/Ghana. One of the seven radio stations contracted by Global Communities RING has completed the three month program cycle (Radio Justice). The program end date for the remaining six stations will be during October 10 – 30, 2016. The program end dates vary by radio station due to their different start dates, competing airtime priorities during holidays, power outages at certain stations, and other technical challenges with radio equipment at the stations. Global Communities RING is tracking broadcasting through log sheets and periodic tuning into the stations for spot checks. DNOs and Global Communities RING staff were also alerted to promote the programming in their respective districts.

⁵³ SPRING/Ghana has conducted the activity in the seven “overlap” districts.

Table 32 Radio Stations Engaged by RING to Air IYCF Serial Drama

Radio Station	Program Start Date	Program End Date
Justice (in Tamale)	July 4, 2016	September 19, 2016
Bishara (in Tamale)	July 4, 2016	October 10, 2016
Pad (in West Gonja)	July 27, 2016	October 15, 2016
Union (in Central Gonja)	July 27, 2016	October 15, 2016
Asase (in Kpandai)	July 27, 2016	October 15, 2016
Gmantambu (in Nanumba North)	July 27, 2016	October 23, 2016
Tizaa (in East Mamprusi)	July 27, 2016	October 30, 2016

Cooking Demonstrations

In FY16, cooking demonstrations were a key community-level intervention for districts. Demonstrations directly reached households and equipped them with hands-on knowledge of how to utilize and incorporate nutritious crops (particularly soy beans and OFSP) into local dishes. The demonstrations reached 8,976 community members (6,879 women and 2,097 men) across 83 communities in eight districts (see Table 33).

Of these community members, 1,804⁵⁴ were active participants, while the remainder were observers who received nutrition education during the mini-durbars that followed the cooking demonstrations. DNOs and Women in Agriculture Development (WIAD) Officers, and at times EHOs, co-facilitated many of the demonstrations in a coordinated and collaborative manner, highlighting the multi-sectoral nature of the activity for the agriculture, WASH, and health sectors. The Global Communities RING technical team provided guidance to the district-level staff to ensure that the demonstrations included a strong element of nutrition education. Organizers emphasized the nutritional benefits of soybeans and OFSP dishes to improve maternal diets and complementary feeding of children under 5, with a particular focus on timely introduction of solid foods at six months. As a result, the value of the cooking demonstrations went above crop utilization skills and became a platform for social behavior change.



Photo 20 Men and women from Kpangu community in Gushegu actively participate in a soy utilization cooking demonstration (above) and a mother in Kpandai feeds her young child a soy fortified dish that the mother learned to prepare during a cooking demonstration (below)

⁵⁴ The data collection form to gather this data was modified mid-year. For the first half of the year, the cooking demonstration data was not disaggregated by active participant and observers. For reporting purposes, we reported the data from the first half of the year under “observers” although it does include active participants and observers combined.

Table 33 Summary of Cooking Demonstrations during FY16 by District and Participant

Districts	# of Active Participants (by sex)			# of Observers (by sex)			# of Communities
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
Chereponi	607	166	773	2,209	627	2,836	27
Gushegu	131	29	160	197	141	338	9
Karaga	226	9	235	86	57	143	9
Kpandai	241	34	275	133	110	243	8
Nanumba South	361	0	361	497	363	860	16
North Gonja	0	0	0	258	139	397 ⁵⁵	4
Saboba	0	0	0	1,540	363	1,903 ⁵⁵	1
West Gonja	0	0	0	393	59	452 ⁵⁶	5
Total	1,566	238	1,804	5,313	1,859	7,172	79

Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MTMSGs)

MTMSG is one of RING's key interpersonal communication activity within the project's nutrition social and behavior change communication (SBCC) efforts. MTMSGs are community-level groups that serve as a forum for mothers and caregivers to receive information, share their experiences, and provide mutual support on how to feed and care for their children within their first 1,000 days of life. RING is developing a cadre of community-level support groups through two primary strategies: 1) CIYCF trainings for health workers and CHVs who will form support groups; and 2) CIYCF trainings for women leaders in the community who will form support groups. To date in FY16, five districts conducted MTMSG trainings for women leaders in the communities.

Table 34 RING Mother to Mother Support Group Summary

District	# of Individuals Trained as Support Group Leaders		# of RING VSLA groups that are now MTMSGs
	Women	Men ⁵⁷	
Chereponi	71	26	24
East Mamprusi	65	27	43
Kpandai	9	0	0
Nanumba South	5	12	0
Saboba	49	0	12
Totals	199	65	79

⁵⁵ These observers actually include active participants, as noted in the footnote above, but because the forms were not disaggregated, Global Communities RING opted to include them only in the participants' column.

⁵⁶

⁵⁷ Some men were included in these activities because they are Community Health Volunteers or Health Workers, or, in the case of Nanumba South, the men are from a Father-to-Father Support Group.

MTMSG Group Leader Advocates for Positive Nutrition Behaviors

Saboba District



Yaa Npoamu (pictured above holding a set of IYCF counseling cards) is a member of a RING VSLA group in Nambiri Community in Saboba. When the district health team approached the VSLA group about forming a MTMSG, her peers quickly nominated her to be the leader. Yaa participated in a support group training led by the DNO and now co-facilitates weekly MTMSG meetings with a trained CHV each Friday after the group's VSLA meeting. Using her set of IYCF counseling cards, she and the CHV lead sessions discussing various IYCF practices that will help improve the nutrition of mothers and children in their communities, such as giving only breastmilk to babies until six months and "not even water when it is hot," she adds.

Yaa is passionate about nutrition and the meetings, and her passion makes a difference in the lives of the group members. When one of the group members went into labor, Yaa came to her house and escorted her to the health facility, reminding her "to practice what we discussed about facility-level delivery." The facility staff determined she was not yet in labor and sent her home. A few days later, Yaa received the call again that her fellow group member was in labor. When Yaa arrived to the house, the labor had progressed too quickly to travel to the health facility. But Yaa was by her side during delivery and supported the mother to initiate breastfeeding during the first 30 minutes after birth, as they discussed during the MTMSG. "We also discussed positioning and attachment, and love and affection when caring for the baby," Yaa added.

With Yaa's support, children in Nambiri Community are well-supported in their first 1,000 days of life.

The trainings in Chereponi, East Mamprusi, and Saboba targeted RING VSLA communities in a bid to scale up MTMSGs alongside the scale up of RING VSLA groups. Through this approach, the RING VSLA groups were sensitized on the MTMSG activity, formed MTMSGs from their VSLA (typically two MTMSGs per VSLA group to maintain a support group size of no more than 15 women per group), and selected one group member among themselves to be trained to co-facilitate the MTMSG sessions with a trained health worker and/or CHV. Saboba was the first district to adopt this strategy, and lessons learned from their experience were applied to the trainings in Chereponi and East Mamprusi. RING is working with districts to scale up this strategy in their 2017 AWP.

Strengthening Monitoring, Supervision, and Coaching for Nutrition

RING technical and logistical support enabled District Health Administration (DHA) staff to monitor, supervise, and coach health workers, CHVs, and non-health sector staff throughout FY16. Global Communities RING worked with the DNOs to ensure that the visits: 1) included follow-ups with training participants to ensure that they were correctly practicing the lessons learned during the training; and 2) were integrated across nutrition service delivery areas when possible (e.g. integrated IYCF and CMAM visits, rather than IYCF alone). Findings from the monitoring visits informed programming decisions, as evidenced in Kpandai.



Photo 21 Health workers from Gulbi HC in Kpandai practice completing CMAM treatment cards and reporting tools.

During facility-level monitoring and coaching visits to Kpandai in FY16 Q3, critical weaknesses were identified in the district's CMAM OPC implementation, including incomplete documentation and poor understanding of the CMAM protocol among health workers. In FY16 Q4, Global Communities RING and the DNO prepared a plan to visit all 14 CMAM OPC sites in the district for intensive mentoring and coaching of health workers on successful implementation of the CMAM program. During Q4, Global Communities RING conducted joint monitoring with the DNO to 17 health workers in seven health facilities with a full day dedicated to each facility. The monitoring team reviewed CMAM registers, report templates, and treatment cards with the health workers, then gave them hypothetical scenarios to practice completing the tools. The monitoring team discussed and corrected mistakes or challenges with the health workers, and then the health workers completed the exercise a second time to ensure their full understanding. After these exercises, health workers recognized where their weaknesses had been and committed to continue what they learned. In September 2016, the DNO conducted visits to five of the seven health facilities to follow up on their action plans from the July and August 2016 visits. The DNO reported improvements in CMAM service delivery, notably improved adherence to CMAM protocols and improved quality of documentation. Staff had only minimal challenges in completing parts of the CMAM OPC cards, CMAM OPC monthly report template, and monthly nutrition report template. The DNO coached health workers on these challenges. The district will continue to support the remaining seven health facilities in FY17 Q1.

Global Communities RING is committed to providing technical support to districts to conduct high quality monitoring and supervision visits as noted above. Global Communities RING has begun working with the NRHD, UNICEF and USAID IPs to develop a standardized checklist for district-level staff to use during monitoring and supervision visits. The checklist will be accompanied by job aids with best practices for conducting high-quality mentoring and coaching visits.

Regional Coordination

In FY16, Global Communities RING was committed to ensuring effective coordination and collaboration with the Ghana Health Service, USAID implementing partners, and development partners in the Northern Region. Global Communities RING participated in regional nutrition partners meetings, and in routine meetings with SPRING/Ghana, USAID nutrition IPs, and the USAID-UNICEF nutrition hub. At the regional nutrition partners meetings, Global Communities RING ensured that RING nutrition activities were captured in the NRHD's 2016 Annual Work Plan, and contributed to the development of the region's stunting reduction strategy which outlined key activities to reduce stunting in the region between May 2016 and December 2018. Global Communities RING also worked with the regional nutrition team to monitor progress on their 2016 AWP activities as well as the progress on the 17 RING districts' AWPs. RING also enhanced ties with GHS colleagues at the national-level by hosting the National Nutrition Partners Coordination Committee (NaNuPaCC) meeting in Tamale in FY16 Q4. RING worked closely with SPRING/Ghana, Systems for Health, and UNICEF



Photo 23 The Regional Nutrition Officer gives the keynote address at the WBW celebration durbar in Central Gonja.



Photo 22 The GHS team from Accra interacts with health workers at Dalun Health Center in Kumbungu.

throughout the year to ensure that project activities (e.g. CMAM trainings and radio programming) complemented one another and avoided duplication.

Component 2b – WASH

Increased Adoption of Positive Sanitation Behaviors among Target Households

During FY16, Global Communities RING monitored the implementation of WASH interventions in all 17 districts and provided necessary guidance and technical support. Based on district work plans, about 50% of planned activities for the calendar year have been carried out at the time of this report. Generally, District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWST) have put most of the hardware and rehabilitation activities off until the final quarter of the year when the rains have died down and agricultural activities are not vying for district attention. These activities include repairing boreholes and latrines, installing handwashing stations and rain water harvesting facilities, and procuring and distributing aqua tabs and household filters to households. With only three months left in the year for implementation, the Global Communities RING WASH Team is coordinating with Governance Advisors and district teams to determine how best to prioritize the completion of activities. A detailed summary of what has been completed thus far can be found below.

CLTS Overview

In FY16, all RING districts planned to implement CLTS in a total of 90 communities (slightly over five per district). By the end of the year, 89 communities had been triggered, bringing the total number of communities triggered under RING to 258. With intensified monitoring and technical support to the triggered communities, 65 of the 258 were verified in FY16 and declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) by the Northern Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (RICCS). Within the reporting period, 1,566 household latrines were constructed, with over 1,000 more in progress. From the inception of the RING project to date, a total of 3,532 household latrines have been constructed without external financial or material support. Home owners also installed 1,156 handwashing stations using locally available materials. In addition, over 3,000 soak away pits have been constructed and thousands of refuse dumps cleared in the CLTS communities to improve overall environmental sanitation and hygiene.

The table and chart below details progress made by each district toward improved sanitation and hygiene using the CLTS approach. While Tamale Metro, Sagnarigu, East Gonja, West Gonja and North Gonja have not yet recorded an ODF community, each of the remaining twelve districts have communities that have attained ODF status. East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga, and Saboba Districts have demonstrated outstanding CLTS performance with high ODF conversion rates (60% or more) so far. These four districts made great strides in FY16 because of strong district leadership, the provision of timely support to communities and households by district staff, effective coordination efforts of field teams, and above all, an unwavering commitment and preparedness for district-wide ODF attainment in 2017. These principles are consistent with the Northern Region goal of achieving ODF status for the region by the end of 2018. With no support from RING or other partners, East Mamprusi District has committed GHs 50,000 from internally generated sources to support CLTS implementation in an additional 25 communities. Based on experience thus far, there is a positive relationship between the strength of district coordination and the speed of ODF attainment.

Table 35 CLTS Progress to Date

District	2016 Targets		# of comms triggered (2016)	# of ODF comms (to date)	Latrines					Est. Pop. Served
	# of comms targeted	# of HHs			Completed (FY16)	Under Construction (FY16)	In Use (FY16)	With Tippy Taps (FY16)	Completed to Date	
Tamale	5	191	5	0	14	200	10	4	14	88
Savelugu	5	136	5	3	76	27	76	25	216	2,030
Tolon	10	187	7	1	263	43	263	183	399	3,791
East Mamprusi	5	289	5	6	119	110	132	95	275	2,365
Chereponi	5	440	6	8	120	47	75	46	651	4,883
Saboba	5	59	5	9	40	6	36	38	139	1,000
Nanumba North	5	650	5	5	134	124	115	41	371	3,042
Nanumba South	5	385	5	4	95	46	95	46	319	2,520
Central Gonja	5	105	5	2	282	24	33	253	282	2,143
West Gonja	5	202	5	0	62	140	0	62	75	495
Sagnarigu	5	226	5	0	34	34	41	15	38	239
Kumbungu	5	104	5	2	89	83	87	71	89	846
North Gonja	5	116	5	0	175	71	138	148	172	1,565
Gushegu	5	41	6	13	38	5	35	37	161	1,594
Karaga	5	83	5	9	25	24	25	50	122	1,220
Kpandai	5	134	5	3	0	40	32	37	169	1,200
East Gonja	5	254	5	0	0	18	16	5	40	284
Total	90	3,602	89	65	1,566	1,042	1,209	1,156	3,532	29,305

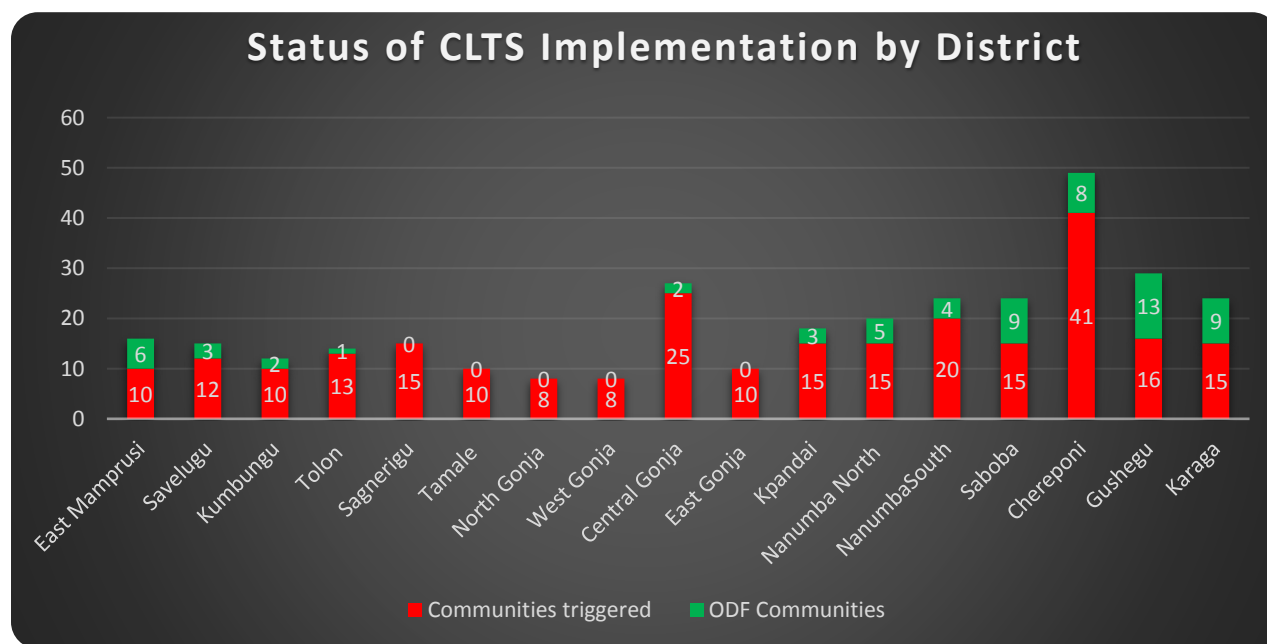


Figure 4 Summary of Triggering versus ODF Achievements by District

Communities in Tamale Metro, Sagnarigu, North Gonja, East Gonja, and Central Gonja have so far been unable to achieve ODF status for a number of reasons, though poor targeting by the districts is the main reason. In the case of Tamale Metro and Sagnarigu, many urban locations with dense populations were selected. These are not ideal settings for District Facilitation Teams (DFT) new to implementation. In rural districts, several settler communities for cattle herders and fishing families were targeted – though the smaller locations are ideal, transient communities such as these tend to not place as much value on building permanent structures. This targeting, coupled with lower quality support to the communities and weak district coordination for the effort has resulted in lackluster performance thus far.



Photo 24 Muniya Abukari of Zaazi Kukuo proudly displaying her latrine and tippy tap.

Hygiene and sanitation improvements in the CLTS communities—made through collaboration between implementing MMDAs, the Northern Regional Coordinating Council, and Global Communities RING—are manifesting in improved quality of life for women, children, and men. Muniya Abukari, a natural leader and a mother of five in Zaazi Kukuo community in Savelugu Nanton Municipality had this to say: *“Before we had our latrines, as a woman, it was very difficult finding a (private) place to defecate. We had to walk long distance into the bush. But now, even when you are cooking and feel like defecating, you just go inside your latrine and defecate comfortably, come out and wash your hands with soap and continue with your cooking. I am very happy and I am sure my colleagues are, too.”*

Global Communities CLTS Field Monitors Pilot

In February 2016, Global Communities engaged, trained, and deployed eight CLTS field monitors in four districts (Saboba, Chereponi, Nanumba South, and North Gonja) to support an intensified approach to CLTS implementation. The monitors worked closely with the District CLTS facilitation teams (DFTs), which are led by the District Environmental Health and Sanitation Departments. The DFTs monitored communities and provided technical support and guidance to households and natural leaders implementing household hygiene and sanitation interventions which seek to achieve ODF status. Each CLTS field monitor monitored two communities a day and spent two-three hours in each community guiding implementation of household hygiene and sanitation interventions. In July 2016, Global Communities RING conducted preliminary performance evaluations of the monitors and of the intervention’s merit as a model for accelerating sanitation and hygiene improvement. Altogether, the 8 monitors had facilitated construction of 447 new latrines, 468 handwashing stations (tippy taps), and 849 soak away pits. The monitors also facilitated the upgrade of 142 rudimentary latrines and replacement of 38 collapsed ones. Fifteen of the communities monitored by the CLTS monitors were also verified and declared ODF by the District Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (DICCS) and the Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee on Sanitation (RICCS). This verification is a positive trend given that Global Communities RING is committed

to the GOG's guidelines on subsidy-free rural sanitation. It is also an indication that, with vigorous monitoring and timely, high quality technical support, sanitation and hygiene improvements can be accelerated considerably, shortening the lag between triggering and achievement of ODF status by communities.

Global Communities RING is currently working with five of the eight monitors in Saboba, Chereponi, and North Gonja, and is recruiting an additional nine monitors with plans to deploy them in East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga, and Nanumba North districts for supportive scale-up in FY17.

District Facilitation Team Training

During field monitoring of CLTS implementation in the latter parts of FY15, Global Communities' WASH Team observed that most of the CLTS communities in the G2G districts were not properly triggered and were poorly monitored and supported by District Facilitation Teams (DFT), resulting in slow ODF achievement. This observation triggered a technical capacity assessment of the DFTs, upon which the WASH Team observed that most of the district officers had not been properly trained in CLTS implementation, resulting in poor triggering outcomes and weak technical support for the communities.

Global Communities RING, along with USAID WASH 4 Health (W4H) and the National CLTS Focal Person, opted to address this gap through an intense, five-day training covering all aspects of the CLTS approach, from triggering to ODF certification. The objective of this training was to provide the targeted DFTs with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitude for effective facilitation of CLTS activities. In total, 43 people from nine districts were trained, including 28 officers from seven RING partner districts, and 15 from W4H districts. The District Facilitation Team participants consisted of staff from the Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit, the Community Development & Social Welfare Office, and the School Health Education Program.

Table 36 District Facilitation Team Training Summary

District	# of Officers Trained		
	Men	Women	Total
North Gonja	3	1	4
Karaga	4	0	4
Kumbungu	4	0	4
Sagnarigu	2	2	4
Tamale Metro	4	1	5
Gushegu	4	0	4
Kpandai	4	0	4
Sawla-Tuna-Kalba ⁵⁸	4	3	7
Bole ⁵⁹	6	1	7
Total	35	8	43

Three of the five training days were dedicated to theoretical discussions, simulations, and preparation for field work, while the remainder of the training was dedicated to hands-on community engagement. The training was structured in a way that discouraged lengthy lectures, and promoted intense field work, numerous group exercises, and collaborative discussions. This strategy enabled participants to interact with one another and to share ideas and experiences. The training also fostered an open environment in which participants felt comfortable asking

⁵⁸ WASH 4 Health District

⁵⁹ WASH 4 Health District



Photo 25 Triggering practice in Vehikuga Community in Kumbungu District

questions and seeking clarification. The most useful aspect of the training, however, may have been the opportunity for district staff to practically apply the lessons they had learned during discussion to field-based scenarios. With the support of Global Communities RING, the Regional Environmental Health and Sanitation Unit (REHU), and W4H facilitators, district officers were given practical, on-the-spot guidance for improved triggering and subsequent follow-up exercises. This support also afforded participants the opportunity to review and use the nationally agreed-upon

data forms for community ODF assessments. Utilizing these forms is the community's first step toward achieving nationally-recognized ODF status.

In addition to the practical opportunities listed above, the training curriculum focused on a number of thematic areas, including:

- Overview of the sanitation situation in Ghana and rationale for the adoption of CLTS as a national sanitation strategy;
- CLTS as a concept (origin, steps, principles, and processes);
- Tools used to facilitate CLTS (F-Diagram, defecation area mapping, glass of water, fecal calculation, sanitation ladder, etc.);
- Skills for team building and facilitation;
- Natural Leaders training content;
- Monitoring and post-triggering activities (house-to-house support visits, community assessments, technical support for latrines, soak away, and tippy tap construction);
- Sanitation data collection, utilization, and management (community assessments, DICCs verification, RICCs verification and ODF declaration, and sanitation database); and
- ODF action plan development.

Refresher Training for District Facilitation Teams

During the reporting year, Global Communities RING facilitated refresher trainings on CLTS facilitation for DFTs in West Gonja, East Gonja, and East Mamprusi – all districts that did not participate in the initial RING and USAID W4H training. The workshops equipped DFTs with the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate CLTS activities in 2016. In all beneficiary districts, the DFT refresher training directly responded to challenges and lessons learned during 2015 implementation and observations made by Global Communities RING during supportive monitoring and supervision visits. The training content was thoroughly discussed with participants in order to ensure that it addressed their needs. The subjects covered during the trainings included:

- Community entry and mobilization;
- Facilitation skills (pre-triggering, triggering, and post-triggering);
- Community self-assessment, and DICCS and RICCS verification and reporting; and
- RING reporting requirements of each CLTS activity.

The training participants (41 men and 22 women) were drawn from the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare, the School Health Education Program Unit of the Ghana Education Service, the District Planning & Budget Unit, the District Environmental Health Department, and the District Water & Sanitation Team.

All key concepts and processes were explored in an interactive manner, using PowerPoint presentations to prompt group discussions and served as a basis for plenary sessions, while the hard skills aspects of the training were accomplished through field engagement, demonstrations, and hands-on practice. By the end of the training, participants could clearly explain how to properly enter and mobilize communities for CLTS, how to conduct community self-assessments and DICCS verification, and how to hold debriefing sessions with community members. The practical sessions demonstrated that participants could construct functional soak away pits and tippy taps for waste water management and handwashing with soap, respectively. These trainings contributed to improvements in the quality of CLTS support provided by DFTs to the communities.

TOT for Natural Leaders Training Workshop

During monitoring and support visits to CLTS communities in FY15, Global Communities RING discovered that content of Natural Leaders (NLs) trainings focused on volunteerism, team building, and NLs' roles and responsibilities as community hygiene workers, but were devoid of information on the technical areas of CLTS implementation that would help NLs effectively monitor and support households in their hygiene and sanitation transformation agendas. Therefore, Global Communities RING organized a three-day capacity building workshop for DFTs in all 17 RING districts to review skills-based trainings for NLs.

The training design was informed by the Global Communities RING field staff's observations, experiences, and lessons learned. The training content covered the following broad areas:

- Community self-assessment and DICCS verification;
- Construction of tippy taps and functional soak aways, and stabilization of latrine pits; and
- Volunteerism, team building, use of Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) toolkit, the SARAR⁶⁰ concept, and the role of NLs in CLTS implementation.

The training was field-based and packed with practical demonstrations for participants. For the majority of attendees, it was the first time they had a hands-on opportunity to construct soak away pits and tippy taps, both vital components of total sanitation and hygiene promotion.

Training of Non-environmental Health Staff on Hygiene and Sanitation Promotion

In the last quarter of FY16, Global Communities RING supported the Environmental Health and Sanitation Department of Chereponi District Assembly to train 32 staff on basic hygiene and sanitation promotion. The training was conducted in two days and brought together 32 participants from the Planning and Budgeting Office, Ghana Education Service, Department of Community Development and Social Welfare, Information Services, Ghana Health Service,

⁶⁰ This is an acronym for Self-esteem (S), Associative strength (A), Resourcefulness (R), Action planning (A), and Responsibility (R). This appreciative inquiry approach emphasizes that communities have their own sense of self-worth which must be respected, that their strength lies in their numbers, that they have the local resources to take action, that they have the capacity to plan, and that they should take responsibility for their actions.

Agriculture, and Environmental Health and Sanitation. The training covered the following broad subject areas: CLTS basics, handwashing with soap at critical times, household water treatment and safe storage, community entry and mobilization, effective communication and facilitation, team building and the use of PHAST tools in facilitating hygiene and sanitation behavior transformation.

The training was co-facilitated by the District Environmental Health Department and the Global Communities RING WASH Team. When delivering the content, the facilitators employed participatory approaches like role play, group discussions and plenary, and presentations with audio visual components. The approach brought everyone into the discussion and enabled all attendees to actively participate. The discussions and presentation were also laced with interesting, important stories and icebreakers to ease stress and make the



Photo 26 Participants in Chereponi conducting a community entry role play

discussions less boring. Though most of the participants had previously participated in similar trainings, this was the first time most were hearing of the SARAR concept and PHAST tools.

Latrine Artisan Training

Through the implementation of CLTS, the demand for improved sanitation and hygiene has increased, with households constructing and using various latrine models. In order to provide local level capacity for the construction of durable latrines in CLTS communities, Karaga, Kumbungu, Sagnarigu, and Savelugu Districts planned to train latrine artisans in 2016.

In FY16, Karaga District conducted a 10-day latrine artisan trainings for ten men selected from ODF communities. Kumbungu and Savelugu will carry out the trainings in FY17 Q1.

The first three days of the training were used to explain concepts and theories of sanitation (CLTS tools, process and principles, sanitation ladder, and disease transmission routes and prevention), as well as business development. During the remaining week, trainees were taken through practical construction of various components of different latrine designs using locally available materials. The overall content of the training included:

- Basic elements of CLTS and sanitation;
- Business development and entrepreneurial skills;
- Latrine pits excavation for different latrine models;
- Pit lining and stabilization of sub structures using old barrels, laterite stones, sticks, etc.;
- Construction of slabs using local materials (clay 'cement' and logs); and
- Sanitation promotion, networking, and latrine marketing.



Photo 27 Lining of latrine pits using local materials (Karaga District)



Photo 28 Lining of latrine pits using local materials (Karaga District)

Borehole and Livestock Watering Area Repairs

In 2016, fourteen districts planned to repair 159 boreholes. All boreholes proposed by the districts for repairs have been field validated and endorsed by Global Communities RING. At the time of the field validation, 27 of the boreholes targeted for repairs in Nanumba North, Nanumba South and Central Gonja were actually functional and providing water. Interviews with community members revealed that some of the boreholes were indeed broken down, but had already been repaired by community Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) using locally mobilized funds. Global Communities RING subsequently held discussions with district leadership, advising those concerned to assess additional boreholes to replace those targeted for repairs that no longer needed them.

So far, 95 of the validated boreholes have been repaired and 40 animal watering areas constructed in Tolon, East Mamprusi, Saboba, Nanumba North, Central Gonja, West Gonja, Gushegu, Karaga, and East Gonja Districts. These additions bring the total number of boreholes repaired to date to 330. The remaining districts are at various stages of completion.

Table 37 Borehole Repair Summary to Date

District	# of boreholes targeted for repair (2016)	# of boreholes repaired (2016)	# of boreholes repaired (to date)	# of animal watering areas repaired (2016)	# of animal watering areas repaired (to date)
Tamale	10	0	10	0	10
Savelugu	10	0	10	0	10
Tolon	10	11	21	7	21
East Mamprusi	25	25	48	9	23
Saboba	15	15	35	0	5
Nanumba North	10	11	42	0	42
Nanumba South	10	0	33	0	0
Central Gonja	20	8	39	0	21
West Gonja	10	9	19	7	17
Kumbungu	0	0	14	14	14
North Gonja	8	0	12	0	12
Gushegu	3	3	7	3	7
Karaga	10	9	19	0	10
Kpandai	10	0	8	0	12
East Gonja	8	4	13	0	9
Total	159	95	330	40	213



Photo 29 Practical session during Karaga District Area Mechanic training



Photo 30 Newly-trained Area Mechanics with Karaga DCE

In accordance with the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) operational guidelines of community ownership and maintenance of water facilities in small communities, and as an effort to sustain the functionality of repaired boreholes, districts planned trainings for 156 Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) and 101 area mechanics to support general operations and maintenance. During the year, 109 WSMTs have been trained, bringing the total number of trained WSMTs to 247. So far, 40 Area Mechanics have also been trained and equipped with toolkits to facilitate repair work.

Table 38 Summary of WSMT and Area Mechanic Training Progress

District	# of WSMTs targeted for training (2016)	# of WSMTs trained (2016)	# of WSMTs trained (to date)	# of area mechanics targeted for training (2016)	# of area mechanics trained (2016)	# of area mechanics trained (to date)
Tamale	10	0	5	0	0	5
Savelugu	10	10	20	0	0	6
Tolon	10	10	10	6	0	6
East Mamprusi	15	0	23	10	0	5
Chereponi	0	0	20	0	0	0
Saboba	15	15	35	8	8	8
Nanumba North	10	11	22	6	6	12
Nanumba South	10	0	30	0	0	0
Central Gonja	20	20	19	5	5	5
West Gonja	10	13	23	6	6	3
North Gonja	8	10	10	7	7	7
Gushegu	10	0	0	14	0	0
Karaga	10	10	10	10	8	8
Kpandai	10	0	0	14	0	0
East Gonja	8	10	20	0	0	0
Total	156	109	247	86	40	65

The chart below shows the number of WSMTs trained who have opened bank accounts during the reporting period. Out of 247 WSMTs trained, 63 (26%) have bank accounts and have mobilized various amounts of money for their operations. Many other trained WSMTs are in the process of opening their bank accounts.

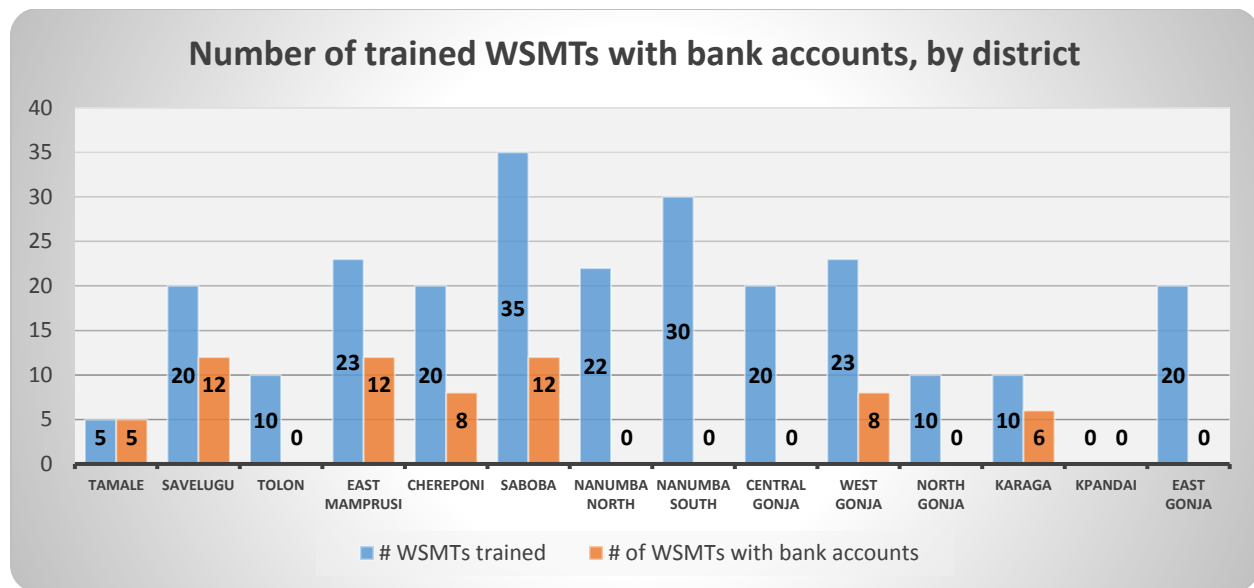


Figure 5 Overview of WSMT's Formed Compared to those Operating with Bank Accounts

Except for Savelugu and North Gonja, where data is unavailable, WSMTs in all other districts have mobilized various sums of money for operation and maintenance of their water facilities. As a demonstration of prudent financial management mechanisms, 63 WSMTs have opened bank accounts. Performance varies by group, however, Nanumba South has demonstrated the highest commitment with its groups so far mobilizing GHs 9,430. Other districts, such as Chereponi and Saboba, have mobilized GHs 4,253 and GHs 3,140, respectively.

Handwashing Stations

In 2016, fourteen districts planned to install 625 handwashing stations in schools and health facilities to facilitate hand washing with soap at critical times. Of the 625 planned, 200 handwashing stations were established during the fiscal year – 177 were established in basic schools with kindergartens, and 32 were established at CHPS compounds in six districts. Alongside the station distributions, district staff organized an accompanying 115 sensitization sessions with beneficiary institutions providing information on the critical times for handwashing with soap, conducting handwashing demonstrations, and discussing issues of maintenance and care for the facilities. Most of the beneficiary institutions were grateful and pledged to promote handwashing with soap and to take proper care of the facilities. The remaining districts are still going through the procurement process for the stations and stands. Global Communities RING participated in multiple demonstrations to ensure that the messages were accurate and that there was an actual skills transfer from the district facilitation teams to the beneficiary groups. As part of their 2016 plans, districts have also included follow-up outreach and user education into their regular monitoring visits to ensure the facilities are maintained and used properly.

Table 39 Summary of Hand Washing Station Plans and Distributions

District	# of handwashing stations planned (2016)	# of stations distributed (schools) (2016)	# of stations distributed (health centers) (2016)	# of stations distributed (to date)	# of demos carried out (2016)
Tamale	100	0	0	0	0
Savelugu	60	0	0	30	0
Tolon	90	54	2	95	26
East Mamprusi	10	0	0	10	0
Chereponi	20	0	0	0	0
Saboba	25	0	0	0	0
Nanumba North	5	5	0	30	5
Nanumba South	30	0	0	99	0
Central Gonja	70	0	0	15	0
West Gonja	25	24	0	52	24
Sagnarigu	80	24	20	84	20
Kumbungu	40	40	0	52	20
North Gonja	30	0	0	30	0
Gushegu	30	30	0	60	15
Karaga	10	0	10	10	5
Total	625	177	32	567	115

To ensure that locally-constructed handwashing stations for institutions are high quality and meet established requirements (height, water capacity, etc.), Global Communities RING provided districts with standard handwashing station designs that include the appropriate dimensions for users in different age groups. This approach is an improvement upon the technical support provided in 2015, which resulted in districts often constructing higher-quality stations than necessary, or vice versa.

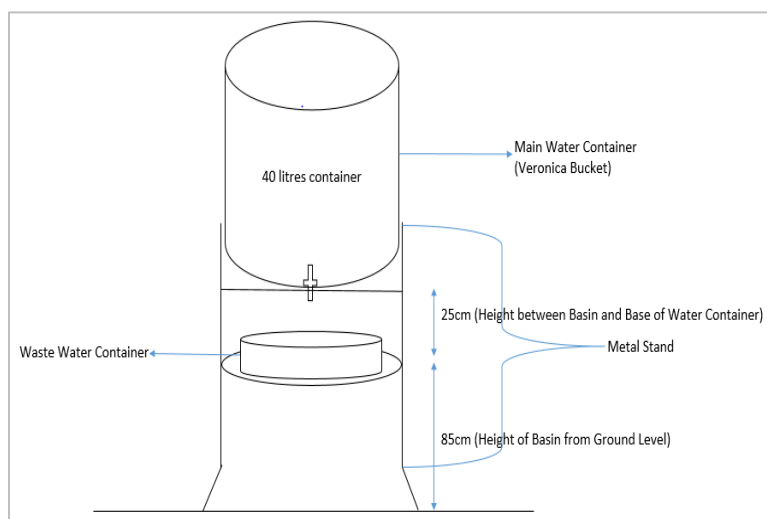


Figure 6 Diagram of ideal dimensions for hand washing stations

Improved Water Storage and Treatment (Aqua Tabs and Water Filters)

Access to safe drinking water remains a challenge for many communities in the Northern Region, especially those selected to benefit from the RING Project. To improve the drinking water quality in RING-supported communities, eleven districts planned to distribute 2,719 household water filters and 4,540 boxes of aqua tabs to 2,719 households. During the reporting period, 436 filters and 751 boxes of aqua tabs were procured and distributed in Nanumba North, Gushegu, and Karaga Districts. The remaining districts have all procured the products and will begin distribution in the coming quarter. From 2014 to date, RING-supported MMDAs have distributed 1,436 household ceramic water filters and 3,091 boxes of aqua tabs in five districts, improving drinking water quality for approximately 11,200 people, based on household size. Distributions were done alongside demonstrations of product use, maintenance, and care, with special attention to the filters.

Table 40 Summary of water filter and aqua tab support

District	Filter Distribution			Aqua Tab Distribution			
	# of Filters Planned (2016)	# of Filters Distributed (2016)	Total Distributed (to date)	Planned (2016)	Distributed (2016)	# of HHS targeted (2016)	Total units distributed (to date)
Tamale	100	0	0	226	0	149	0
Tolon	N/A	N/A	250	N/A	N/A	N/A	715
Nanumba North	500	0	250	500	0	500	250
Nanumba South	300	110	110	300	0	300	0
Central Gonja	450	0	0	1,000	0	296	0
West Gonja	250	0	500	500	0	250	875
Sagnarigu	280	0	0	560	0	280	0
Kumbungu	199	0	0	199	0	199	0
North Gonja	165	0	0	330	0	330	0
Gushiegu	250	251	501	500	502	250	1,002
Karaga	200	75	75	400	249	200	249
East Gonja	25	0	0	25	0	25	0
Total	2,719	436	1,686	4,540	751	2,779	3,091

Rain Water Harvesting

In 2016, six districts⁶¹ planned to install 67 rain water harvesting facilities in schools and clinics to harvest water for handwashing and other sanitation practices. To improve the quality of water harvested, Global Communities RING provided each district with copies of rain water harvesting system schematics with incorporated schematics for first-flush diverters and slow sand filtration. These two pieces are key in ensuring the harvested water is potable, as many people, especially young children, may drink the water.

During the year, Global Communities RING provided technical guidance and support for the installation of 43 rain water harvesting facilities in Tolon, Central Gonja, and Tamale as per the standard design of the system set up (as provided by Global Communities RING). The remaining three districts (Nanumba North, Kpandai, and West Gonja) have all constructed the base platforms, but have not yet installed the facilities. From RING project start to date, four districts have installed 80 rain water harvesting facilities in educational and health facilities. All systems installed this year have fully incorporated first flush diverters to flush out debris and bird droppings that are usually carried along in the first rains. Unfortunately, Global Communities RING has been unsuccessful in getting the private sector to produce and sell biosand filters to districts for incorporation into the construction of the system. Districts are, however, advised to procure and distribute ceramic filters as alternatives while Global Communities RING explores the option of providing district staff with relevant knowledge for self-production of the biosand filters in FY17.

Table 41 Summary of Rain Water Harvesting System Progress to Date

District	# of RWH systems targeted (FY16)	# Installed (FY16)	# Installed in schools (FY16)	# Installed at health centers (FY16)	# Installed to date
Tamale	10	9	8	1	20
Tolon	20	20	12	8	40
Nanumba North	10	0	0	0	0

⁶¹ Tamale, Tolon, Nanumba North, Central Gonja, West Gonja, and Kpandai.

Central Gonja	14	14	8	6	15
West Gonja	10	0	0	0	5
Kpandai	3	0	0	0	0
Total	67	43	28	15	80

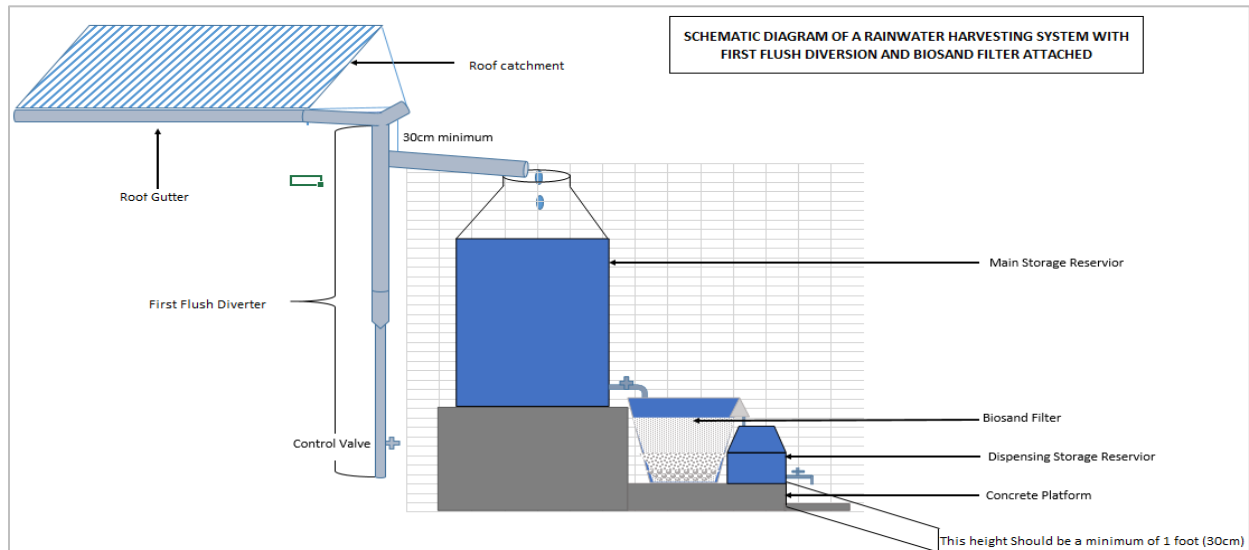


Figure 7 Schematic for Rain Water Harvesting and Filtration Systems Installation



Photo 31 Installed systems with 4,000L holding capacity at Wantugu Health Centre in Tolon District

Pipe Water Extension

Both Tolon and Kumbungu Districts experience difficulties trying to access groundwater via boreholes and subsequently planned to extend Ghana Water Company pipelines to two communities each. Tolon budgeted GHs 150,000 for the entire intervention as per their 2016 AWP. Kumbungu District, however, operates under the subcontracted mechanism and Global Communities RING planned to cover the costs as the activity as the bulk of the intervention would have to be subcontracted out. Given that it was the first time this activity was going to be carried out, Global Communities RING opted to let Tolon District take the lead so we could learn from them before implementing the activity in Kumbungu.

To ensure that the pipe was laid correctly and water would ultimately flow, Global Communities RING requested that Tolon (via the subcontractor they hired to carry out the work) provides a comprehensive technical design (including pipe routes, a design of ancillary work, nodal pressure, and hydraulic network design for simulated water flow), bill of quantities, and disaggregated cost for review and technical support. After some delays in submission, Tolon has now completed the remaining design work and submitted a comprehensive report, which includes the hydraulic network design for the simulation exercise. Technical review of the documentation shows they have generally complied with all necessary conditions required for the groundwater borehole extension. Based on the designs and the results of the simulation test, Global Communities RING agrees with the subcontractors' assessment that water will flow after the pipe is laid and connected. However, going forward, the following issues need to be addressed:

- The district needs to adequately engage Ghana Water Company Limited and the CWSA for further technical support and administrative advice. There can be complex power dynamics surrounding who controls the distribution lines and who has the right to connect to them;
- The DA (or contractor) needs to clarify with the design consultant the best way to connect the new extension to the outlet of the existing High Level Tank (HLT); and
- The DA needs to notify management at the Nyankpala overhead tank of the additional population added to their pipelines so that the people in the two communities can be fairly served with proper regulation and rescheduling of pumping times.

Latrine Repairs

In addition to promoting construction of household latrines using the CLTS approach, in 2016 RING supported construction of new units and repairs to existing latrines in basic schools with KGs and health facilities. Latrines at these locations provide children and women of reproductive age with complementary access to safe sanitation while they attend classes or seek healthcare. In 2016, seven districts planned to repair or construct 37 latrines. By the end of the year, only 12 were repaired in Tamale and Kpandai. The remaining latrines have been technically assessed by district technical teams and validated by Global Communities RING. The RING Project has supported districts to repair 44 latrines to date.⁶²

⁶² It should be noted that, in 2016, RING allowed selected districts to undertake new construction of latrines. However, in 2017 and moving forward, only latrine rehabilitation will be allowed, with no new construction.

Table 42 Summary of Institutional Latrine Repairs to Date

District	# of new latrines planned (2016)	# of new latrines constructed (2016)	# of rehabilitated latrines planned (2016)	# of latrines rehabilitated (2016)	# of latrines repaired (to date)
Tamale	0	0	6	2	7
East Mamprusi	2	0	5	0	2
Nanumba North	0	0	0	0	20
Central Gonja	0	0	5	0	4
West Gonja	0	0	5	0	0
North Gonja	0	0	2	0	0
Kpandai	0	0	10	10	10
Savelugu	2	0	0	0	0
Total	4	0	33	12	44

4.3. Component Three

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

FY16 was a year of progress under the Governance Component – districts have made great strides in addressing Public Financial Management (PFM) risks, engaging community members and other stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, and supporting sub-structures to achieve their full potential. With a successful Area Council strengthening pilot activity underway, and the beginnings of social protection efforts, MMDAs are taking the necessary steps to ensure services are delivered to the most vulnerable households in their communities.

Regional governing bodies have made notable progress as well. The RPCU continues to play a lead role in coordinating the efforts of other departments, while the regional departments for Community Development and Social Development initiated efforts to ensure their district-level staff had adequate technical knowledge and support to carry out their expanded roles. Main highlights from FY16 implementation can be found below.

PFM Risk Mitigation Progress in G2G Districts

During FY16, Global Communities RING Municipal Finance Specialist, in collaboration with Governance Advisors, provided technical support and guidance to G2G MMDAs to implement their risk mitigation, ensuring that their PFM systems were robust enough to minimize fiduciary risks and ensure that resources are benefiting the vulnerable households as planned. The support included the following:

- Periodic PFM review meetings with MMDAs officers to discuss implementation progress and challenges as well as verification;
- Provision of one-on-one technical support to MMDA staff, specifically in areas such as IT usage; and
- Facilitated zonal training for generic risks that cut across all the districts which included trainings in asset management procedures, procurement and internal audit.

MMDAs during the past year have made noticeable progress with Tamale Metropolitan Assembly having implemented all its risk mitigation measures, and with seven out of nine districts achieving 85% or more completion rate, with the exception of Savelugu-Nanton which

has reached 76%. Since FY15 Q4, MMDAs have progressed by 48% on average against achieving their remaining milestones.

Table 43 Summary of PFM completion progress as of FY16 Q4 for G2G districts

District	# of mitigation measures identified	# of mitigation measures completed (as at FY16 Q4)	% of mitigation measures completed (as at FY16 Q4)	% of mitigation measures completed (as at FY15 Q4)	% of annual progress (FY15 Q4 > FY16 Q4)
Central Gonja	23	19	87%	39%	+48%
East Mamprusi	26	24	92%	31%	+61%
Nanumba North	30	29	97%	63%	+34%
Nanumba South	20	18	90%	58%	+32%
Saboba	34	32	94%	32%	+62%
Savelugu-Nanton	17	13	76%	53%	+23%
Tamale	22	22	100%	9%	+91%
Tolon	24	22	92%	46%	+46%
West Gonja	32	29	91%	59%	+32%

Despite this progress, there are some medium and high risk areas which will continue to receive technical support from the Global Communities RING team in FY17. The key areas include: budget variance analysis & reporting training for district management (*i.e Central Gonja, East Mamprusi, Savelugu-Nanton and Tolon*); development of an ICT policy and strategic plan (*i.e Central Gonja, Nanumba North, Nanumba South and Saboba*); training of Audit Report Implementation Committee (ARIC) members on their roles and responsibilities (*East Mamprusi*), and development of an audit tracking system and three-year Strategic Audit Plan (*West Gonja*).

The table below highlights the number of outstanding high, medium and low risk areas to be focused on in the first and second quarters of FY17.

Table 44 Summary of outstanding PFM risk mitigations by risk level for G2G districts

District	Total mitigation measures outstanding	High risk mitigation measures	Medium risk mitigation measures	Low risk mitigation measures
Central Gonja	3	2	1	-
East Mamprusi	2	2	-	-
Nanumba North	1	1	-	-
Nanumba South	2	2	-	-
Saboba	2	2	-	-
Savelugu-Nanton	4	2	2	-
Tolon	2	2	-	-
West Gonja	3	1	1	1
Total	19	14	4	1

PFM Risk Mitigation Progress in Subcontracted Districts

During FY16 Q4, Risk Mitigation Plans (RMP) for the seven subcontracted districts were made available to the Global Communities RING Governance Team by the USAID Tamale office to enable Global Communities RING to provide technical support to the districts in implementing the recommended measures. These RMPs were based on the findings and recommendations arising from risk assessments undertaken in May/June 2015 by the USAID Regional Financial Management Office (RFMO) team.

Upon receiving the reports in September 2016, initial PFM meetings were set up with all the respective seven district officials which included District Coordinating Directors, District Finance Officers, District Planning Officers, District Budget Officers, Internal Auditors, Store Keepers, Procurement Officers and Human Resource Managers and GC RING Municipal Finance Specialist & Governance Coordinator to achieve the following purposes:

- To complete an action plan for the implementation of the risk mitigation measures. This included the review of the plans, allocating responsible officers for each recommended mitigation measure and agreeing on timelines for completion; and
- To establish and verify whether any risks identified and recommended mitigation measures still exist in the district since the assessment was carried out in May and June 2015.

The table below provides a risk mitigation implementation status as of the close of FY16.

Table 45 Summary of PFM Risk Mitigation Implementation Status as of FY16 Q4 for Subcontracted DAs

District	# of mitigation measures identified	# of mitigation measures completed (FY16 Q4)	% of mitigation measures completed (FY16 Q4)	Outstanding Risk Mitigation Measures Rated “High”
Chereponi	29	18	62%	ICT Strategic Plan & ICT Policy development
East Gonja ⁶³	28	13	46%	Development of a monitoring system to track advances paid to staff
				Purchase of locked office cabinet for employee records
				Development of an ICT Strategic Plan & ICT Policy
Gushegu	35	2	6%	Development of budget management procedures & training District management on variance analysis & reporting
				Development of a monitoring system to track advances paid to staff
				Ensuring that ARIC quarterly meetings are held
Karaga ⁶³	23	2	9%	Development of budget management procedures & training District management on variance analysis & reporting
				Management training on the importance of payment supporting documentation
Kpandai ⁶³	27	12	44%	Development of budget management procedures & training District management on variance analysis & reporting
				Development of a monitoring system to track advances paid to staff
				Establishment of cash holding limit for the district
Kumbungu ⁶³	31	8	26%	Development of budget management procedures & training District management on variance analysis & reporting
				Development of a monitoring system to track advances paid to staff
				Ensuring that ARIC quarterly meetings are held
North Gonja	21	5	24%	Development of a monitoring system to track advances paid to staff
Sagnarigu ⁶³	31	3	10%	Development of budget management procedures & training District management on variance analysis & reporting
				Update of all personnel files with pertinent information and purchase locked cabinet for employee files
				Development of an ICT Strategic Plan & ICT Policy

For FY17 Q1 and Q2, Global Communities RING’s PFM strategy is to support districts to focus on addressing their “high” risk mitigation measures, while simultaneously continuing to implement procedures already put in place to address the medium and low risk areas alongside during the year. To support this, Global Communities RING has provided all districts with

⁶³ These MMDAs will transition to G2G Districts during the 2017 calendar year.

specific feedback on items to include in their “Take Corrective Actions to Address PFM Risk Mitigation Measures” activity.

Community Engagement Efforts

Kpandai

During FY16 Q4, Kpandai District carried out consultation meetings in five communities⁶⁴ in an effort to gain feedback on services rendered by the Assembly. Overall, communities were excited for the opportunity to participate in the forum as it allowed them the opportunity to interact with their elected and appointed officials. Though some citizens that benefitted from RING interventions cited challenges with the late delivery of OFSP vines, they were satisfied overall with the numerous ways the district had begun to reach out to them. In each community, they noted that they felt empowered through the Community Action Planning process, as it was a conduit for engaging more effectively with the DA to produce tangible results, something they felt had been lacking in their interactions thus far.

Tamale Metro

Tamale Metro carried out two citizens’ fora in the South and Central Sub-Metros, which sought feedback from community stakeholders on both broad issues affecting them, as well as feedback on any RING activities attendees had benefitted from. Key discussion points included:

- Worsening waste and sanitation (both Municipal Solid Waste and Liquid Waste) situation in the communities;
- The deplorable nature of government owned schools;
- Request for details on how taxes were being put to use in the communities;
- Challenges with urbanization, specifically traffic and public toilets, and requests for Metro plans on how to deal with it; and
- Concerns from Market Queens about the delays from the opening of the new Abuabu Market and how it was negatively affecting their business.



Photo 32 Tamale Assistant Coordinating Director Ahmed addressing participants at the South Sub-Metro Forum.

The Metropolitan Assembly used the opportunity to sensitize community members and stakeholders on their tax obligations to the Assembly and the Region, as well as touched on numerous development projects they have embarked on using RING and other funds available. Though the main points of discussion were challenges, the atmosphere was generally cordial and the Metro felt the exercise was incredibly beneficial as it gave them specific areas to follow-up on and report back through the Sub-Metro channels. As key next steps, the Metro has planned to adopt the Citizen’s Forum approach as a standard engagement mechanism in their district development plans. To enable this, they will strengthen the Zonal Councils through capacity building efforts, as well as outfitting the offices with the necessary equipment to support posted staff.

⁶⁴ Kofido, Nagbijado, TIKARINI, JATIMA and OGEGERE.

During FY16, all districts engaged in some form of community engagement. Under the RING Governance Menu, there are multiple activities to choose from including district-level engagements, Networking Forums & Stakeholder Meetings. Four districts⁶⁵ so far have carried their district level engagement activity with nine districts yet to implement them. At the sub-district level, Citizens Forums via Assembly Members is a popular choice among districts. Six MMDAs⁶⁶ so far have carried out 20 sub-district engagements, typically at the Area Council level. Districts also carry out forums at the community level, and, while not that different structurally from Citizen's Forums, they do ensure that the entire community has a chance to hear from the Assembly directly, as well as voice their opinions and concerns. In FY16, seven districts⁶⁷ engaged with 84 communities to solicit feedback on activities carried out, take suggestions for improved services, and note specific needs each community had for possible incorporation into district development plans. Another, more specific type of community engagement, is the development of the Community Action Plan (CAP). This year, fourteen districts⁶⁸ planned to undertake CAPs, with 175 of the planned 295 completed thus far.

District Sub-Structure Strengthening

During FY16 Q4, the Global Communities RING Governance Team facilitated the first Area Council Roles & Responsibilities Trainings in Kpandai and Gushegu Districts. Six out of the seven subcontracted districts requested facilitation support from Global Communities RING, with three districts supported thus far (Kumbungu included). The training sought to equip Area Council members with skills and knowledge to improve their effectiveness in the delivery of their mandate.



Photo 33 Global Communities RING Governance Coordinator, Eric Maasole, facilitating a Roles & Responsibilities Training to Nkumdi Area Council Members in Kpandai District.

Global Communities RING Governance Coordinators facilitated the two-day training for 33 participants (29 men and 4 women) in Kpandai's Nkumdi Area Council, then for 66 participants (64 men and 2 women) of the Gushegu Area Councils.⁶⁹ In both districts, the District Planning and Coordinating Units (DPCUs) staff actively participated and shed light on emerging issues, concerns and questions from participants.

The training topics covered CAPs development and utilization process, revenue mobilization and management for sustainable operations of the Area Councils, monitoring and evaluation duties of Area Council members, social accountability concepts, community engagement techniques, and environmental sanitation management responsibilities. The training

⁶⁵ Central Gonja, Kumbungu, Savelugu, West Gonja (East Mamprusi and Nanumba North planned for 2016 calendar year, but not yet undertaken).

⁶⁶ East Mamprusi, Kpandai, Nanumba North, Saboba, Sagnarigu, Tamale.

⁶⁷ Central Gonja, East Gonja, Kpandai, Kumbungu, Sagnarigu, Tamale, Tolon.

⁶⁸ Chereponi, East Gonja, East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga, Kpandai, Kumbungu, Nanumba North, North Gonja, Saboba, Sagnarigu, Tamale, Tolon, West Gonja.

⁶⁹ In rural districts, for both the District Assembly and its sub-structures, it is not uncommon to have a power imbalance between genders. The discrepancies between men and women in the trainings reflect the people that have been elected or appointed to those positions, which RING has no control over.

methodology was mixed and interactive, with presentations, group exercises and plenary discussions using both English and the predominant local language (Twi and Dagbani).

A major concern raised during each meeting was the non-functional Area Councils as a result of the dilapidated nature of their offices. Participants expressed concern about the poor state of the buildings across all eight area councils and called for their rehabilitation as a matter of urgency. Another challenge raised was the fact that Assembly Members are not always involved during the revenue mobilization process. Assembly Members are not consulted by revenue collectors and therefore knew little about the revenue collected in their electoral areas. This was attributed to the dysfunctional nature of the Area Councils in general, which has allowed for external 'revenue task forces' to be engaged by the DAs, thus depriving the Area Council of their 50% ceded revenue to perform their mandated functions. The district staff present agreed that this was a practice that should be reviewed and now that Area Council members had received basic training in their roles and responsibilities, they would be better equipped to manage this aspect of their work. On roles of Area Councils in self-help and development project monitoring, some participants expressed their frustration about the failure of the DAs to address issues reported by Assembly Members and Unit Committees regarding shoddy work by contractors.



Photo 34 Cross-Section of participants during recent Roles & Responsibilities of Area Council Members training in Nkumdi Area Council, Kpandai.

Generally, both training programs were successfully carried out with high attendance and effective participation in deliberations. Participants were elated that an opportunity was created to build their capacity on their core functions, as most were genuinely interested in improving the overall status of their communities. They were tasked to put the learning into practical use in order to enhance the development of their Electoral Areas and Area Councils.

During Q4, Saboba District carried out their own training of Area Council Members' Roles & Responsibilities training, which included an overview of the local government system, participatory planning and model standing orders. Nineteen people participated (1 woman and 18 men), and, although they noted the session was worthwhile, they commented it covered too much information in a short period of time. Additionally, West Gonja District carried out its second quarterly Area Council meeting with 15 representatives (14 men and 1 woman) from the Busunu and Larabanga areas.

While Global Communities RING recognizes the merit in ensuring that all Area Councils have trained members and are fully functional, some locations are better suited than others for sustainable results given market and road access and the likelihood for generating revenue. With this in mind, in FY16, the Governance Team embarked on a sub-structure strengthening pilot with three District Assemblies that the team felt were poised to successfully manage the effort. With the support from district staff, the Global Communities RING Governance Team carried out Roles & Responsibilities Trainings for five Area Councils in East Gonja, Savelugu and East Mamprusi. Upon conclusion of the training, the Area Council and Unit Committee members drew up action plans for their next steps, based on development priorities they

identified for their respective areas. Global Communities RING will support the districts with follow-up on these plans in the coming quarter.

In some cases, the Area Councils have responded so well, that the team is working with the district to determine other ways the sub-structures can be brought on board. The Gbintiri Area Council in East Mamprusi District will be a pilot site for rolling out the Community Score Card initiative. The Governance Team supplied East Mamprusi with a concept note (see [Attachment A](#)) explaining the approach and will meet early in the next quarter to determine the next steps. Functional district sub-structures are an ideal mechanism to roll out the Community Score Card as the Area Council Members can solicit honest feedback from community members on services rendered by the district. Their unique perspective on MMDA roles and responsibilities will also temper this feedback as they are privy to the actual mandates of the Assembly, whereas some community members may have skewed perceptions as to what services the Assembly should provide.

For the year, thirteen districts planned to undertake the sub-structure strengthening activity in 55 Area Councils, with Roles & Responsibilities Trainings, as well as quarterly meetings for the Area Council. Some districts opted to equip the offices with computers, motorbikes and other office supplies to increase their functionality. Thus far, twelve districts are at some level of implementation, with 46 Area Councils and 787 Area Council and Assembly Members trained.

Collaborative Planning & Budget Meetings

In an effort to promote collaboration between districts and stakeholders (Assembly Members, NGO and CBO representatives, traditional authorities, etc.), each MMDA undertook at least one planning and budget meeting within the calendar year. These meetings were scheduled at strategic points in the year to solicit feedback on district development plans and budgets (though the latter is less common, work plans are routinely reviewed by all stakeholders).

To ensure that district departments implementing RING activities were also fully aware of plans, budgets, and activities carried out by the district as a whole, Global Communities RING collaborated with each district to hold their first 'Inception Meeting' for the 2016 work plans. Each district invited approximately 50 stakeholders, including traditional authorities, Heads of Department, and field-based staff often responsible for direct implementation. During the meetings, which took place in January and February of 2016, attendees reviewed the detailed work plans and budgets for their own activities, as well as other departments, ensuring a transparent implementation cycle moving forward.

In FY16, the 17 partner MMDAs held 42 such collaborative review meetings, with additional meetings planned for the coming quarter as work plans and budgets for 2017 are finalized.

Capacity Building Efforts

Asset Management Training

In response to GOG requirements and USAID PFM Risk Mitigation recommendations, the Global Communities RING Governance Team, in collaboration with an external consultant, facilitated a series of zonal asset management trainings. These trainings took place in Damongo and Yendi, and included selected staff from all G2G and subcontracted districts, as well as two staff from the NRCC. Each district sent their Finance Officers, District Internal Auditors, Procurement Officers, Storekeepers, RING Project Accountants and RING Focal Persons, and the NRCC was represented by the RING Project Accountant and a Development Planning Officer.

Key objectives of the training were to ensure that: districts are in compliance with the legal and administrative systems and procedures for maintaining assets; movement of fixed assets within the Assembly and/or between MMDAs are properly coordinated and documented to ensure allocation of assets to relevant staff; fixed assets are maintained and safely guarded to minimize deterioration, waste and theft; and participants are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to develop a Fixed Asset Registry (FAR) beginning with assets procured under the RING project.

The sessions were practical and participatory, and topics included fixed asset management and asset life cycle presentations, two group case study discussions and a practical work session during which district teams began developing their RING FAR. This Excel-based asset register was fashioned in line with the GOG template and can easily be incorporated into the districts' own FAR.

The RING FAR will serve not only as a management tool, but a planning tool as well. Given that many RING partner MMDAs will be entering their third and fourth years of implementation, numerous assets, such as motorbikes and laptops, have been procured and distributed to district staff to better enable their work. Moving forward, if a district plans to procure additional electronic equipment, or motorbikes, they must justify the purchase and planned distribution in accordance with that officer's or department's needs and engagement with RING activities. Global Communities RING will monitor this during the 2017 AWP development cycle.

Based on the recommendation of participants during the workshops, Global Communities RING will oversee replication of the asset management training at the district level for all Heads of Department and direct users of fixed assets, such as vehicles, office equipment and furniture.

Table 46 Summary of Participants for Asset Management Training

Zone	Districts	Participation		
		Men	Women	Total
Damongo	Central Gonja, West Gonja, Tolon, Kumbungu, Tamale, North Gonja	29	7	36
Yendi 1	East Mamprusi, Saboba, Chereponi, Karaga, Gushegu	32	0	32
Yendi 2	East Gonja, Kpandai, Nanumba North, Nanumba South, Savlugu- Nanton, Sagnarigu	35	1	36
Total	17	96	8	104

Additional Capacity Building Trainings

To enhance internal capacity skills in other areas, such as record keeping, auditing, and monitoring and reporting, a number of districts selected capacity building trainings in their 2016 work plans. Fifteen districts⁷⁰ planned and budgeted for some form of capacity building training in the areas listed in the table below, though a few plan to do so in FY17 Q1. In some cases, districts called upon Global Communities RING to facilitate the trainings, while others hired external consultants instead. In almost all cases, Global Communities RING had staff present for at least one day of the training to provide quality assurance. The table below provides a district by district summary of additional capacity building trainings undertaken in FY16.

⁷⁰ All but Karaga and Tamale, although they received Asset Management Training.

Table 47 Summary of District Capacity Building Trainings in FY16

District	Training							
	Financial Record Keeping	M&E Reporting Techniques	GIS	Internal Audit	ICT	Staff Appraisal	Budget Variance & Reporting	Procurement
Central Gonja	35	19	23	-	-	-	-	-
Chereponi	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-
East Gonja	-	-	-	18	-	-	-	-
East Mamprusi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gushegu	13	-	-	14	-	-	-	14
Karaga	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kpandai	-	37	37	24	-	-	-	-
Kumbungu	-	12	12	13	-	-	-	-
Nanumba North	-	-	19	-	-	-	12	-
Nanumba South	-	-	-	-	-	38	-	-
North Gonja	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Saboba	29	29	9	-	29	20	-	20
Sagnarigu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Savelugu	-	-	-	-	-	49	24	-
Tamale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tolon	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	32
West Gonja	-	22	24	-	13	-	-	23
Totals	77	119	124	86	42	157	36	122

District Level Support Meetings

In Q4, the Global Communities RING Governance Team led a series of supportive visits to four RING MMDAs to ensure that districts are on track with the implementation of their 2016 RING Annual Work Plans. A summary of each meeting is captured in the paragraphs below.

Chereponi

The Global Communities RING Governance Team conducted a series of support visits to Chereponi District with the aim of ensuring a smooth transition of RING Project Focal Persons. The new Focal Person was provided an orientation on the status of RING activities and also the sub-contracting processes and procedures. Global Communities RING utilized this forum to review some monitoring discrepancies noted in 2015 soybean beneficiary records, as well as to ensure plowing for new 2016 households, as well as those who received support in 2015, would be completed in a timely manner. Upon the request of the new Focal Person, the Governance Team also held a separate meeting to discuss the district's progress against their 2016 subcontract milestones.

North Gonja

Using the DA monthly progress meeting as a conduit, Global Communities RING guided the North Gonja District Assembly to assess the status of their 2016 AWP implementation. During the assessment, the team realized that, while nutrition and VSLA activities were on course, the majority of other interventions were behind schedule. There was also growing concern that the outstanding time sensitive agricultural activities might be in jeopardy due to the onset of heavy rains. The District Coordinating Director (DCD) entreated the team to accelerate their efforts, and called for bi-weekly meetings until the district is on track. As of recent monitoring visits, the district seems to be implementing on schedule, though they are behind in the poultry activity. Discussions with the Global Communities RING Livelihoods Team indicates that this activity will ramp up in the coming quarter.

Saboba

Similarly, Saboba DA was lagging behind with its Governance activities, and as such, Global Communities RING engaged the DCD and Focal Person on how to ensure good governance activities were on course. Once this was brought to their attention, the Saboba Team indicated they would prioritize the implementation of activities in the coming weeks. As a result, the district carried out several capacity building trainings for GIS, ICT, PFM and M&E areas, as well as Roles & Responsibilities training for Area Council members. The district has also begun procedures to develop 20 Community Action Plans.

Nanumba North

During Q4, the Global Communities RING Governance Team noted some reporting discrepancies from the district, in particular with activities carried out by the District Health Management Team (DHMT). Closer inspection revealed that some savings from a completed nutrition activity had not been retired properly. The Governance and Nutrition Teams from Global Communities RING held a supportive review meeting with district leadership to inform them of these challenges and determine the appropriate course of action. Once alerted to the issue, the Assembly acted quickly, liaising with the newly-appointed District Director for Health Services (DDHS) to resolve the issue. Following this, the district has recovered the portion of savings from an earlier activity and subsequently apportioned it to another activity to enable its full implementation. Though the Global Communities RING preferred approach would have been to work hand-in-hand with the DNO that was at the heart of the issues, the officer has since been transferred to a non-RING district.

RING Project Focal Person Transition Support

During the quarter, several RING Focal Persons transitions took place including appointments to some GOG personnel who were new to the RING project. The Global Communities RING Governance Team provided support to the West Mamprusi District Planning Officer (a non-RING district) as he transferred to Savelugu-Nanton Municipality (a G2G RING District). In the same vein, the Governance Team also provided support to the Savelugu-Nanton Assistant Planning Officer as she was promoted and transferred to the Chereponi District to serve as District Planning Officer. In both cases, the RING Team (Global Communities, with assistance from the NRCC and USAID) ensured that proper hand over took place, including orientation to the project and its history in the district, sharing of relevant project documentation (work plans, budgets, past project and financial reports, etc.), and one-on-one capacity building for programmatic and financial reporting. This support is ongoing and will continue until both Focal Persons are comfortable in their new roles.

2016 Mid-Year Review and 2017 Annual Work Planning Session

During the reporting period, the NRCC hosted the 2016 Mid-Year Review and 2017 Annual Working Plan Joint Meeting for both direct-funded and subcontracted MMDAs. Those in attendance were: District Coordinating Directors, RING Project Focal Persons and/or a representative from the Planning and Coordinating Unit, Community Development and/or Social Welfare Officer, VSLA focal person, District Directors of Agriculture, Agriculture Focal Persons, District Director of Health Services, District Nutrition Officers, Environmental Health Officers, District Finance Officers and RING Project Accountants. Also in attendance was a USAID Team comprising both Accra and Tamale-based officers, led by the Deputy Director of the Health Office of USAID Ghana.

To create an enabling environment for information sharing and to lend more time for review and reporting, the Region opted to host the meeting in three groups, instead of two, and decreased the length of the meetings from three days to two days. This allowed districts to meet together based on their geographic zones (as previously proposed by Global Communities RING for ease of technical support delivery) to share best practices and lessons learned. The USAID Team also used the opportunity to make presentations on Ethics and Basic Financial Management.

Taking into account the three separate meetings, there were 184 district officers in attendance, with 20 officers from the NRCC and 10 officers from USAID. Global Communities RING staff were also on hand to provide feedback on presentations, answer technical questions, and support facilitation.

Table 48 Attendance Summary for Joint 2016 Mid-Year Review and 2017 Annual Working Planning Sessions

Organization	# of Participants		
	Men	Women	Total
MMDAs	155	29	184
Northern Regional Coordinating Council	12	8	20
Global Communities RING	20	4	24
USAID	5	5	10
Totals	192	46	238

The three rounds of working meetings were productive with high participation from all attendees. Districts were well-prepared with their presentations focused on outcomes and results, along with lessons learned and challenges, and how these can be scaled up or applied to 2017 planning.

One major outcome of the 2016 AWP implementation celebrated during the review was the successful implementation of the small ruminants intervention with a near zero mortality rate in most districts. District officers' efforts during implementation was acknowledged for the turnaround. To reward those with strong performances and encourage others to do the same, the senior leadership from USAID, NRCC and Global Communities RING presented achievement certificates to several offices, units, and districts that had performed beyond expectations in 2016.

Using the information highlighted in the successes and challenges as of mid-year 2016, each district provided an outline of their plans for 2017, including which activities they planned to carry out, how many communities that will target, and ultimately, how many beneficiaries they plan to cover. After the presentations, each district received feedback from other DAs, the regional departments in attendance, USAID and Global Communities RING, covering such areas as activities chosen and their suitability for the geography and cultural practices, the scale of implementation, and complementary overlap of activities, like VSLA and CLTS with livelihoods interventions. With this in mind, the MMDA staff returned to their districts to begin incorporating the valuable feedback into their 2017 AWP and budgets.

In the field, Governance Advisors have provided additional support to ensure that all districts submit their first 2017 AWP drafts timely for joint review by Global Communities RING, RPCU and USAID. Most districts have taken the approach of having individual departments work on their own first drafts before bringing them together at the district for a joint review and harmonization. Global Communities RING has encouraged coordination among the various departments in the planning stage to ensure that implementation of cross-cutting activities, such as cooking demonstrations and nutrition durbars, are supported by the various technical units.

Overall, the Global Communities RING Governance Team is satisfied with the progress made so far and looks forward to the completion of the work planning cycle by FY17 mid-Q1.

Gender Action Plan Implementation Support

The Global Communities RING Governance Team continues to support each district towards the implementation of their 2016 Gender Desk Officer (GDO) action plans. Key activities during the reporting period included:

Saboba

In FY16 Q3, Global Communities RING organized a three-day training for GDOs to strengthen their capacity and technical skills for gender mainstreaming at the community and district levels. However, the Saboba GDO was unable to participate due to scheduling conflicts. In an effort to ensure the GDO was fully-prepared to carry out 2016 action plan items, Global Communities RING conducted a one-on-one supportive training visit to the district. During the visit, the Global Communities RING Team reviewed the GDO training materials with her and discussed district needs along with her areas of strength as a GDO. With continuous support from Global Communities RING, the GDO was able to prepare a revised action plan, more clearly aligned with RING Project goals and objectives.

Savelugu-Nanton

The Savelugu-Nanton GDO facilitated a short series of community forums at the Zonal Council level (Tampion, Savelugu, Diare, Moglaa, Nanton and Pong-Tamale). The engagements covered two main topics – women’s and children’s rights and women’s roles as stakeholders and their participation in governance.

Nanumba North

With support from Global Communities RING, the Nanumba North District Assembly initiated a professional capacity building effort for a member of the District Gender Support Network, Ms. Fairuza Yahaya. The program included a three-week course that focused on developing presentation and facilitation skills, as well as how to properly plan for and conduct training of trainers exercises. The Global Communities RING Governance Team supported Fairuza in drafting a motivational statement and ultimately securing a scholarship for her to attend the program, which was hosted by Global Platforms Ghana in Tamale. The DA supported her with transportation and per diem allowances as the training costs were covered by the scholarship. This comes as a welcome trend by the district who recently supported another district staff, Madame Lizzy, an administrative secretary, to graduate from a two-week course on professional capacity building also provided by Global Platforms.

Regional and District Gender Support Network Progress

During FY16 Q4, the Global Communities RING Governance Team continued to provide various levels of support to regional and district gender efforts.

At the regional level, Global Communities RING supported the NRCC to host a progress meeting for the Regional Gender Support Network. The meeting was attended by the RPCU, Department of Gender, Department for Social Development, and Global Communities RING. The meeting examined progress of activities, including the planned gender review meeting and Gender Model Family pilot engagement efforts. Global Communities RING also took the opportunity to mention the Trafficking in Persons Report and Ghana’s need for improved performance in the areas of human trafficking, forced labor and commercial sex work. As many of these areas disproportionately affect women of reproductive age and children – especially

those from vulnerable households – Global Communities RING felt it prudent to raise the area of concern and emphasize GOG’s commitment to improving their efforts. The regional attendees mentioned ways in which their departments could work to alleviate regional challenges, such as *kayayo*⁷¹. Through livelihoods efforts with VSLA and ensuring that women have access to alternative income streams, the attendees stressed that RING was indirectly working to mitigate these problems.



Photo 35: Participants discuss gender issues during a regional stakeholder meeting which reviewed Evaluate for Health’s Gender Operations Research findings.

In a similar effort, the West Gonja District Assembly launched a Gender Support Network, which consists of various department representatives and acts as a technical committee to support gender action plan implementation. The committee consists of eleven members (seven men and four women). This initiative was facilitated by the GDO in the district.

To complement these efforts, Global Communities RING hosted a half-day meeting with various regional development partners (SEND Ghana, NORSAC, ADVANCE, ATT, Global Platforms), the NRCC and some district GDOs, to discuss challenges and lessons learned thus far from RING project implementation, as well as share ideas on

gender mainstreaming in development programming. The meeting also provided a platform to review recent E4H Gender Operations Research findings, which highlighted areas of women’s time burden and limited control over household resources as key constraints.

Regional Department of Gender Inclusion in 2016 NRCC Work Plan

The Regional Department of Gender (RDG) has not been actively involved in project implementation to date, despite an obvious link between their departmental mandate and RING Project gender objectives to support women in decreasing their time burden, and increasing their social capital and their control over household assets. During the quarter, however, the Governance Team was able to negotiate the inclusion of the RDG into the project in an effort to strengthen monitoring of district-level Gender Desk Officer activity.

After their successful co-facilitation support of capacity building efforts in FY16 Q3, RDG worked with Global Communities and the RPCU to develop an activity plan and budget for incorporation into the NRCC RING 2016 Annual Work Plan. That draft is still under revision and will be finished by mid-Q1 of FY17. It will be funded from savings made thus far in regional work plan implementation.

Social Protection Support at the Regional Level

In FY16 Q4, the Global Communities RING Governance Team also provided support to the Regional Department of Social Welfare (RDSW) to develop a Social Protection and Poverty Graduation training curriculum based on national level priorities. This TOT would target heads of departments from each district and equip them with policy information, as well as practical skills

⁷¹ *Kayayo* is a local term meaning ‘to carry’ in the Hausa language, and refers to the seasonal northern migration of men and women to the south to look for work as head porters and other manual laborers.

needed to support their field officers to build case files and undertake supportive household visits.

Once the curriculum had been developed and facilitators from the National LEAP Program Office were brought on board, the RDSW hosted 35 Social Welfare and Community Development Officers (9 women and 26 men) for the regional TOT. Presentations covered both theoretical and practical areas, such as an overview of Ghana's Social Protection Policy, linking vulnerable households to social safety net programs, the poverty profile of Ghana, targeting and enrolling households, case management, and supportive monitoring for households. Global Communities RING facilitated three sessions – one on an introduction to social protection and its importance under the RING approach, along with one session on basic counseling skills, and another on district work planning adjustments. Many of the sessions included interactive learning, such as role playing, where participants could enact proposed scenarios and give critical feedback on the approaches used.

As a follow-up item, each district will carry out condensed trainings for their field officers to enable them to conduct proper household targeting and supportive follow-up visits. These trainings will take place in FY17 Q1 and Global Communities RING and the RDSW will provide facilitation support and quality assurance as needed.

G2G Liquidation Support

Following the G2G liquidation training in February, Global Communities RING Municipal Finance Specialists (MFS) provided technical support to RING Districts Project Accountants during Q2 & Q3 to equip them with the requisite skills to prepare accurate liquidation reports. Key areas of focus included Cash Management, Accounting & Reporting, and Basic Excel knowledge.

In the case of Cash Management, Accounting & Reporting, MFS supported the Accountants to understand the relationship that exists between the annual work plan cash profiles, the liquidation reports, the RING cash book balances, retired and unretired funds, bank balances, as well as the timely recording of transactions into the cash book. Each of these areas has an impact on the immediate cash needs of the district and the subsequent advance request submitted to USAID. The Governance Team has encouraged all districts that were not including them to ensure that the District Finance Officers and/or the Project Accountants attended the monthly project coordination meetings. Furthermore, as the liquidation report template is MS Excel based, Global Communities RING provided the Nanumba North, Saboba, Savelugu and NRCC Project Accountants with basic Excel training, including creating worksheets, saving documents, formatting, and inserting basic formulas for ease of computation.

2016 Subcontract Execution Summary

The Global Communities RING Governance Team continued to play a leading role in supporting the subcontracted districts to achieve their milestones within scope, time, cost and quality. This includes support on the timely raising of invoices for completed milestones to ensure that funds are readily available to meet their immediate cash needs, monthly field monitoring to check the quality of completed milestones and to ensure that the GOG rules and regulations are being adhered to with emphasis on procurement, assets management, record keeping and reporting. The table below provides a summary of the 2016 subcontract progress.

Table 49 2016 Subcontract Execution Performance Summary (in Ghana cedis)

District	Total Subcontract Value	Payment to Date	Subcontract Balance	Milestones		
				# of subcontract milestones	# of milestones completed	% milestones completed
Chereponi	607,976.72	305,206.29	302,770.43	115	43	37.4%
East Gonja	842,828.58	732,809.38	110,019.20	128	83	64.8%
Gushiegu	713,283.60	479,967.77	233,315.83	120	63	52.5%
Karaga	754,316.84	594,677.71	159,639.13	106	58	54.7%
Kpandai	769,488.30	632,909.17	136,579.14	139	81	58.3%
Kumbungu	752,769.00	593,679.64	159,089.36	127	70	55.1%
North Gonja	739,059.94	499,830.59	239,229.35	153	65	42.5%
Sagnarigu	927,464.14	581,310.39	346,153.75	133	46	34.6%
Total	6,107,187.12	4,420,390.94	1,686,796.19			

By the close of FY16, subcontracted districts had invoiced for an average of 50% of their milestones, with East Gonja and Sagnarigu Districts at the high and low end, respectively (64.8% and 34.6%). Though these figures may seem low given the time of year, it is important to note that, like G2G districts, subcontracted districts began implementation in late-March and have moved at a steady pace to implement twelve months of activity over nine months. Timely invoicing, though it has improved significantly in some districts, continues to be a challenge as milestones invoiced lag behind the work completed on the ground. With this in mind, Governance Advisors and Governance Coordinators continue to provide additional support to districts that struggle with invoicing lag, whether it is with the preparation of the invoice itself, verify the claims, or track down the deliverable documentation.

As noted in previous reports, the Global Communities RING Governance Team, upon receipt of the invoice, reviews all activities invoiced and provides feedback to the districts. In some cases, the Governance Advisor attended the activities and is able to provide first hand verification of the work completed; in other cases, when RING officers are not able to attend to an activity, the Governance Coordinator follows-up with the district to verify the claim before the payment of the invoice is executed (see [Attachment B](#) for a Monitoring Report example).

With political activities are picking up as the country's elections draws closer, Global Communities RING will continue to work closely with the subcontracted districts to ensure completion of their 2016 work plans.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the year, the Global Communities RING M&E team continued to help government partners standardize their M&E efforts and foster an environment where best practices are applied. Major progress has been made toward incorporating those best practices, as all 17 MMDAs, the NRCC, and the Northern Regional Health Directorate (NRHD) now use standardized data collection forms for RING activities implemented at the district, community, and household levels. The Global Communities RING M&E team has made significant progress improving the RING M&E system and coordinating timely and accurate data collection during FY16.

With these improvements, the majority of FY16 activity data has been entered into the RING DHIS2 database, with a priority on livelihoods interventions such as small ruminants, soybean, groundnut, shea, OFSP, and poultry. The remaining data on the other interventions like VSLAs, WASH and nutrition are undergoing similar cleaning processes and will be entered into the database once completed.

Internal Systems Strengthening for RING M&E

USAID played a significant role in the enhancement and strengthening of the M&E systems for RING, MMDAs, and the NRCC. Evaluate for Health (E4H) and Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Support Services (METSS) were contracted by USAID/Ghana Health, Population and Nutrition Office (HPNO) and the Economic Growth Office (EG) to support the USAID/Ghana RING Project by reviewing and enhancing RING’s M&E system and by strengthening the M&E capacity of RING counterparts – the NRCC and the MMDAs. The RING M&E system enhancement and capacity building support activity (SECBS) required reviewing the NRCC, MMDAs, and RING M&E systems, and identifying areas of strength and weakness, as well as the standardization of data collection tools, capacity building, and data quality improvement plans.

The second phase of the RING M&E enhancement activity included a three-day training of trainers (ToT) for the NRCC, NRHD, and five RING M&E team members. The ToT increased participants’ understanding of M&E concepts, tools, and systems and built the capacity of the RING project staff and its key stakeholders to then become M&E capacity builders of partner MMDAs.

The regional ToT was followed by capacity building workshops for 17 DAs in four clusters. The turnout was successful, with 115 (99 men and 16 women)⁷² of the planned 119 participants attending the full workshop. District officers present were representatives from the Planning Unit/Project Focal Person, nutrition, environmental health, agriculture, Management and Information Services (MIS), Business Advisory Center, and Community Development and Social Welfare Departments.



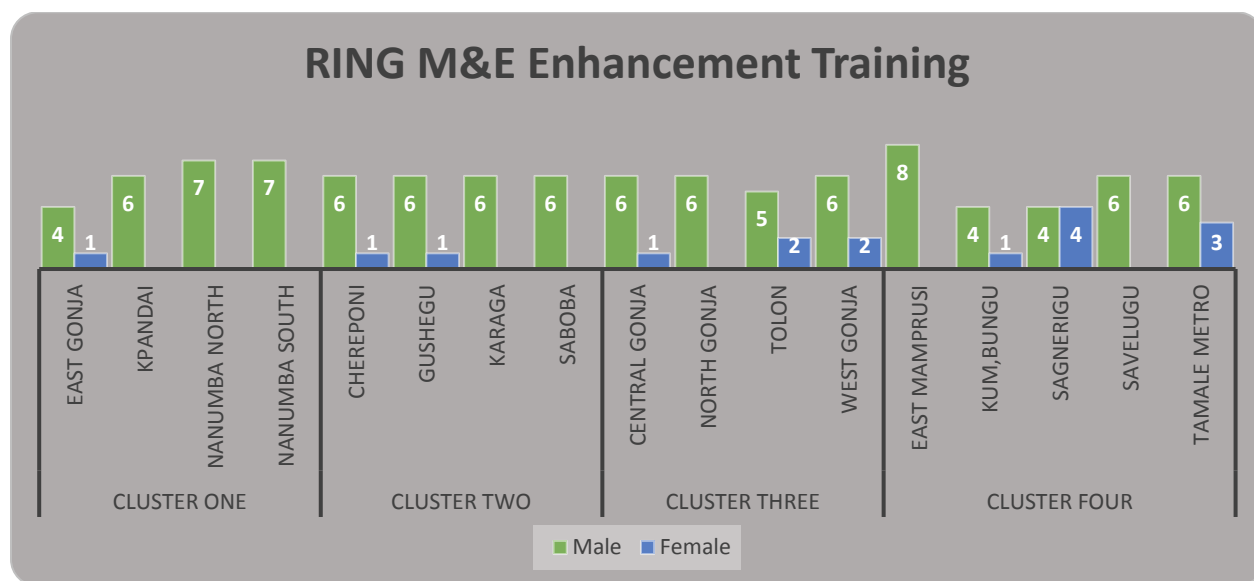
Photo 37: Global Communities RING GIS Officer, Emmanuel Antoh (center), responds to a question by Savelugu-Nanton Planning Officer, Alhaji Inusah Abukari



Photo 36: Participants engage in group work during the training

⁷² Gender discrepancy based on the staffing in each district for the target officers.

Figure 8 Attendance Summary (by Cluster) of RING M&E Enhancement Training



The RING M&E Enhancement Training took place July 18-22 in four clusters in Damongo, Yendi, and two in Tamale. Facilitators from E4H, the NRCC, and Global Communities RING trained participants on various topics, including basic M&E concepts, M&E plans, results frameworks for performance indicators, roles and responsibilities of the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU), M&E activities, data quality assurance, and complete review of RING data collection tools. RING governance advisors and technical team leaders were also trained to enhance their M&E skills and better position them to support MMDAs on M&E needs as they arise.

Progress on RING Database Development and Use

During FY16, the Global Communities RING M&E team made substantial progress towards the design and completion of the RING DHIS2 database. All project data collection tools have been uploaded and the performance and reporting indicators have been incorporated into the database system. Based on the E4H, METSS, and Global Communities RING senior management assessment of the database system, all fine-tuning and recoding of modified forms and indicators is complete. Dashboard displays of indicator calculations have been completed and are operational.

To date, nearly 27,000 household profiles have been entered into the database, while about 44% of those beneficiaries have been ‘enrolled’ into the various interventions where they have received support. To aid this massive data entry exercise, Global Communities RING contracted seven data entry clerks to input data from project start up to date. Household profiles of those beneficiaries who received small ruminants, soybean, VSLA, OFSP, shea, salt re-bagging, corn milling, and leafy green vegetable support in 2014 and 2015 have been entered into the database, but have not yet been enrolled into the specific interventions. The priority was given to FY16 beneficiaries and interventions. As 2016 data entry is now completed, 2014 and 2015 data back log will be completed by December 31st, 2016.

Revisions to RING Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP)

In collaboration with E4H and METSS, the RING M&E team and project senior management intensively reviewed the Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP), including the Feed the Future (FTF), contract, and custom indicators. The review team made several modifications during the process, and revised the data collection tools to reflect all updates. After a joint appraisal the review team proposed a consolidated list of 50 indicators (the revised AMEP will be submitted jointly with the FY16 Annual Report for review and approval)

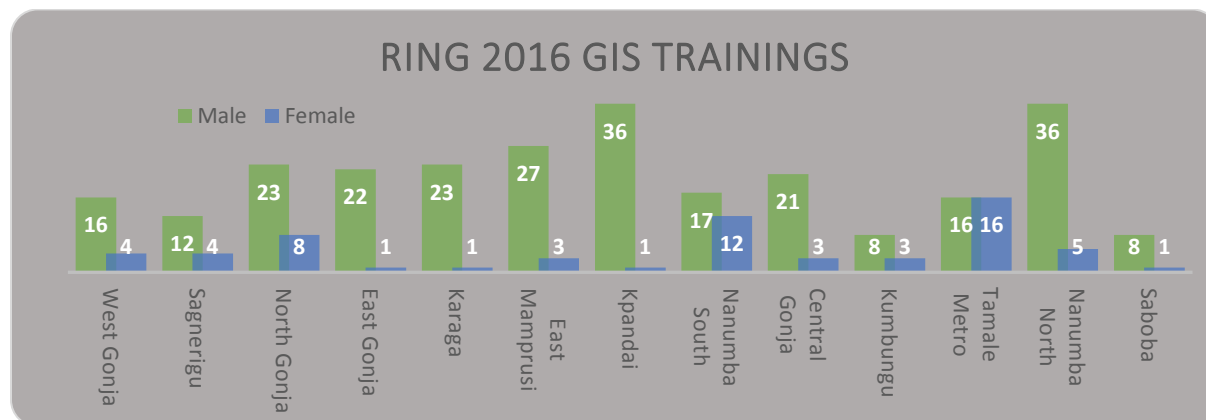
The revised AMEP includes 13 indicators that will require a midline and end line beneficiary survey. Based on the updated AMEP METSS, in collaboration with Global Communities RING, is reviewing the survey instrument and developing the survey methodology and plan. The data collection will be conducted in February 2017.

GIS Capacity Building Support to MMDAs

As part of the MMDAs 2016 AWP, the M&E team facilitated GIS trainings in 13 districts for a total of 326 officers (265 men and 61 women). The standard training curriculum was designed to build the internal capacity of district staff to undertake mapping of both RING project intervention sites and district resources. After these trainings, the M&E team set up a cloud-based GIS database for nine districts, which enables them to store and manage their GIS data and other relevant datasets. These districts are now able to visualize and export the data they collect on their mobile devices as maps and Excel spreadsheets. The districts are also able to perform basic GIS and statistical analysis with aggregated data to support decision making.

Most districts that were able to map resources within FY16 are now using the geodata to plan and make informed decisions. The geodata helps districts determine developmental gaps in vulnerable communities (such as limited potable water or market access), prioritize the needs resulting from these gaps, and incorporate solutions into their work plans. Districts that embrace this approach to development planning are positioning themselves to more effectively implement critical activities that are geared toward achieving the objectives of the RING project. The M&E team will continue carrying out these trainings based on MMDA work plans and provide remote and/or on-site support in the collection and entry of geodata.

Figure 9 Summary of GIS Trainings by District (disaggregated by sex)



Incorporation of RING GIS Data into METSS Ghanalinks Platform

Throughout the year, the Global Communities RING M&E team collected geodata on project interventions for input into the METSS project's Ghanalinks web platform. This information came from both RING staff, as well as from district data collection teams, as noted above. This interactive website serves as a useful sharing platform for many USAID/FtF projects in terms of intervention sites, technical services provided, and project coverage areas. As it stands, the Global Communities RING M&E team has uploaded information on 225 communities and their respective interventions to the web mapping application on the [Ghana RING page](#). The maps will be updated when new data is received by the M&E unit.

Engagement with USAID Implementing Partners

During the year, the Global Communities RING M&E team participated in the USAID|Ghana Office of Economic Growth Implementing Partners M&E Staff Working Group meeting. The meeting boasted a packed agenda, covering a variety of areas including: an overview analysis of FTF in Ghana (2012 to 2015), briefings from new projects, opportunities for collaboration, approaches in conducting beneficiary-based surveys, AIDtracker Plus, the Ghanalinks platform, integrating environmental monitoring and compliance into M&E, and mainstreaming gender into FTF project implementation and M&E. The meeting also afforded the team an opportunity to participate in the METSS knowledge management portal and Microsoft Excel training.

Global Communities RING was also invited to share best practices in integrating GIS into M&E systems. This experience sharing took place during the quarterly M&E community of practice meeting, hosted in Accra. From this overview, other USAID IPs were expected to learn from the RING GIS model and integrate a similar approach into their programming.

6. Social Behavior Change Communication

In FY16, the Social Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) Team engaged in a number of supportive efforts to make RING Project programming more effective and reach a wider audience. In addition to coordination with USAID IPs and other development partners. A summary of activities can be found below.

SBCC Strategy

In FY16, Global Communities RING drafted an SBCC strategy to guide the implementation of SBCC project activities over the next three years. The RING SBCC strategy takes into consideration all other SBCC strategies, materials, and activities developed and implemented by other implementing partners, including SPRING's nutrition SBCC campaign, C4H's Good Life, Live it Well Campaign, and W4H's WASH campaign. RING aims to identify current gaps in SBCC, and intends to fill them as needed and as appropriate.

SBCC Coordination

Global Communities RING is committed to ensuring effective coordination and collaboration with the Ghana Health Service, USAID implementing partners, and development partners in the Northern Region. Throughout FY16, Global Communities RING met routinely with the SPRING Project, and with the W4H and C4H teams, to discuss programmatic linkages, ongoing coordination on SBCC material development and dissemination, and new areas for collaboration. Global Communities RING was also an active voice during the development of the W4H BCC Strategy and C4H *Good Life, Live it Well* campaign.

SBCC Coordination Meeting for USAID IPs in Northern Region and the Health Promotion Unit of GHS

In FY16, USAID IPs operating in the Northern Region⁷³, as well as the Regional Health Promotion Unit (HPU) of the Ghana Health Service held four SBCC coordination meetings. These meetings provided a common platform for IPs to discuss and share ideas on key SBCC activities rolled out by each project to facilitate collaboration and avoid duplication. The Global Communities RING Chief of Party, Nutrition Manager, and SBCC Coordinator, as well as Joseph Ashong from USAID Tamale, participated in these meetings. Agenda items included the refreshed “Good Life, Live it Well Campaign” by Communicate for Health (C4H), a review/discussion of the HPU’s 2016 work plan, SBCC materials (stunting advocacy video, IYCF radio episodes, IYCF counselling videos, and WASH 1000 video) developed by SPRING/Ghana, RING OFSP promotion scale-up campaign, the draft ODF logo for Ghana, and highlights of major SBCC activities implemented. During the final meeting of the fiscal year, the stakeholders underlined that UNICEF should participate to these meetings.

Logo Development for OFSP and CLTS Initiatives



Figure 10: Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato Initiative Proposed Logo for Northern Region

In line with RING 2016 plans to scale up the production and utilization of OFSP, Global Communities RING in collaboration with UDS worked with a graphic artist to develop several concept logos for the OFSP initiative. After multiple rounds of feedback and input and feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders through a pre-test in 3 communities and districts, the final version of the logo was selected (see figure 10). Global Communities RING and UDS are now using this logo as part of the social marketing campaign to increase awareness of the nutritional benefits of OFSP, and to further engage current and future farmers in the activity.

Since supporting the CLTS initiative in all target districts and coordinating with the region and other WASH development partners, Global Communities RING has noted there is little consistency in how ODF status is depicted. To build consistency among partners implementing similar CLTS activities and working towards ODF status, Global Communities RING developed 3 draft ODF logos that could be used on signboards and other CLTS promotional materials. The same recognizable symbol, if used by all partners, would bring uniformity to ODF efforts in the region, while becoming a symbol that households and communities would quickly and proudly associate with sanitary communities.

The Global Communities RING team first presented the three logo designs to a group of WASH stakeholders at a meeting with 19 districts and multiple WASH partners in Tamale organized by the Regional Environmental Health Department for critique and feedback. The feedback

⁷³ RING, SPRING, W4H, S4H, and C4H.

gathered was used to revise and fine-tune the logos. The revised logos were presented to Ghana WASH sector stakeholders at the fourth National CLTS stock taking forum organized by the Environmental Health Directorate under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to solicit further feedback. Almost all participants and stakeholders (community members/beneficiaries, districts and regional partners/stakeholders, and WASH sector stakeholders including the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate and UNICEF) that discussed and gave feedback on the logos preferred the logo in Figure 13. The general interpretation of this particular logo is that it depicts a clean household supported by the entire family. Although the logo in Figure 13 was preferred over the others, participants at the 4th National CLTS stock taking forum recommended that for the logo to receive general buy-in and adoption as the national ODF logo, the following revisions need to be made:

- The latrine design used in the logo, though very common and known to be a household latrine in most communities in the northern part of Ghana, will be interpreted to mean something else in the southern part of the country. The recommendation given was that the latrine design should be revised to one that is nationally recognizable, or sufficiently abstract to be interpreted as such;
- Likewise, the type of the handwashing device (a tippy tap) used in the logo is not known in most communities/districts in the southern part of Ghana. And since the emphasis is always on handwashing itself and not the type of device used, the tippy-tap sketch should be replaced with a good sketch depicting handwashing with soap under running water, or again sufficiently abstract to be interpreted as such.

The way forward for the ODF logo is that Global Communities RING will incorporate feedback and submit a revised logo to the REHSD for review and submission to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for approval.



Figure 13 (Above) Top Proposed ODF Logo



Figure 12 (Above) Proposed ODF Logo



Figure 11 (Above) Proposed ODF Logo

Stunting Advocacy Video Launch

Early in FY16, Global Communities RING collaborated with the SPRING/Ghana Project for the launch of a SPRING-developed advocacy video on stunting entitled, “When a King Has Good Counsellors, His Reign is Peaceful.” The advocacy video is a behavior change communication tool aimed at stimulating discussion among leaders and a call to action within their communities to reduce the prevalence of stunting among young children. Representatives⁷⁴ and officers from all partner districts participated in the event. The launch was presided by the Northern Regional Minister, Abdallah Abubakari. After the video screening, he gave remarks that urged participants to critically reflect on the video and take action in their communities. Following the launch of the video, Global Communities RING supported the districts to realign some of their nutrition activity budgets to incorporate the dissemination of the video to community leaders. Global Communities RING also began training selected district staff as facilitators who will screen/disseminate the video in the ten districts that do not overlap with the SPRING project.

⁷⁴ District Chief Executives, District Nutrition Officers, Health Promotion Officers, Health Information Officers and/or District Directors of Health Services.

Dissemination of IYCF Episodes Developed by SPRING/Ghana in RING Districts

In the fourth quarter of FY16, Global Communities RING launched radio programming as part of a complementary SBCC effort for nutrition education. Global Communities RING contracted seven radio stations for twelve weeks to air the six IYCF episodes developed by SPRING. These stations' airtime coverage areas were geographically complementary to the station contracted by SPRING. One of the seven radio stations contracted (Radio Justice) has completed the three month program cycle. The end date for the remaining six stations will be between October 10th and 30th, 2016. Global Communities RING is tracking broadcasting through log sheets, and periodically tunes into the stations for spot checks. District Nutrition Officers and Global Communities RING staff were also encouraged to promote the programming in their respective districts.

RING OFSP Scale-Up Press Conference and Promotional Song Launch

On Thursday, August 25, 2016, Global Communities RING organized a press conference to update the media and the general public on the scale-up of the project's OFSP initiative. Overall, twenty three representatives from fifteen media outlets attended the press conference, along with more than one hundred and forty additional stakeholders, including those from the NRCC, USAID | Ghana, CSIR-SARI, UDS, and six MMDAs⁷⁵.



Photo 38: Habib Shahadu, RPCU, presenting the overall strategy for OFSP scale-up

Beyond providing updates on the OFSP intervention, the press conference provided a unique platform to launch the OFSP promotional song, which was produced pro-bono by three popular Northern Region singers. Global Communities RING also used the platform to make presentations on various aspects of the OFSP intervention, such as the nutritional value of the plant, the rationale for its selection under the RING Project, and its resiliency and suitability in northern soils.

⁷⁵ Tamale, Tolon, East Gonja, Kpandai, Nanumba North and Nanumba South

Apart from presentations and the launch of the “Alaafei Wuljo” song (entitled “*Yimiyana kati kou*” – “Come Out and Let’s Farm” in Dagbani), RING issued a press release on the need for large-scale cultivation and utilization of OFSP. The press release emphasized the motivation for the OFSP intervention, noting that the decision by USAID to support the scale up was born out of encouraging results from the pilot phase and evidence of OFSP’s ability to tackle vitamin A deficiency, a serious health issue in northern Ghana. Following the press conference, Global Communities RING provided USB drives to the media containing the song, presentations from the meeting, and additional materials on OFSP health benefits.

Dissemination of OFSP Promotional Song in RING Districts

In FY16 Q4, Global Communities RING contracted twelve radio stations with good coverage and listenership to air the OFSP promotional song for a period of 12 weeks (as detailed below). All twelve stations began broadcasting the song on September 30, 2016 and will stop broadcasting on December 29, 2016. Each of these was presented with a broadcast tracking sheet, which Global Communities will use to validate completeness of the contract and as a basis for payment for services rendered.



Photo 39: “Alaafei Wuljo” artists Mariwan, Maigah and Salma (L-R) sharing with the audience their motivation for composing the song.

Table 50: Radio Stations Engaged for OFSP Cultivation Song

Radio Station (District)
Justice (in Tamale)
Bishara (in Tamale)
Pad (in West Gonja)
Union (in Central Gonja)
Asase (in Kpandai)
Gmantambu (in Nanumba North)
Tizaa (in East Mamprusi)
Radio Galki (in Saboba)
Simli (in Kumbungu)
Kayiti (in East Gonja)
Zaa (in Tamale)
GBC Savannah (in Tamale)

Pre-testing and Revision of RING Activity Implementation Guide

In FY16, Global Communities RING printed several copies of the Activity Implementation Guide (formerly called the “RING Cookbook”) for review and feedback by six districts. Overall, the districts officers that will ultimately use the book to guide planning, field implementation, and activity monitoring, found it to be useful, providing concise directions for each step of key activities (small ruminants, OFSP cultivation, nutrition and sanitation durbars, etc.).

Given that the guide contains activities from all technical components, Global Communities RING requested feedback on the printing strategy and whether certain departments would prefer complete books for each officer, or sections based on the number of officers typically involved in each activity. Four of the six districts indicated that they would like a full guide, while the remaining two said separate sections by component would be satisfactory. Given the cross-cutting nature of many of our key activities, Global Communities RING will opt to provide the full guide to each officer and believes it will be more beneficial and cost effective due to economies of scale. Based on a quick assessment of officers engaged in implementation, Global Communities RING will finalize the guide by the end of November 2016 and print it for distribution to partner districts in early 2017 before AWP implementation start-up.

7. Success Stories

Realizing Dreams Though VSLA in Northern Ghana

Traditionally, women in rural northern Ghana are reserved, seen as responsible for childcare at home, and engage mainly in household and domestic activities. Due to these gender constraints, many women are reluctant to take business risks and entrepreneurial initiatives in pursuit of economic progress. Such is the case for many women in Bakpaba, an indigenous farming community in the Nanumba North District of Ghana's Northern Region. As a mother of three children, it was a challenge for Kosmos Patience to do anything different than usual. Growing up, Patience wanted to become an entrepreneur in order to be financially independent. This quest motivated her to start a petty trade in household consumables, such as cooking oil, gari, sugar, salt, rice, beans, and other foods. Even though Patience identified a growing demand for palm oil and raw cassava within and outside her community, her lack of additional financial resources prevented her from extending her trade.



Photo 40 Kosmos Patience making sales at her newly-expanded small business

In 2015, the Nanumba North District Assembly (NNDA), with support from the USAID Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Project, facilitated the formation of two Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) in Bakpaba with the goal of facilitating savings and making home-grown credit facilities available to women. VSLAs are one of the flagship interventions of the RING project. Using VSLAs, RING promotes and supports the formation and training of women's groups to save collectively and access loans from the group for starting and expanding small businesses. Patience took advantage of this intervention and enrolled in "*Tisung Taba*", which means "Let's help one another" in the

local Nanum dialect. After a few months of saving, she took out a GHs 200 loan (52 USD) from the group to invest in inputs to begin trading in palm oil. Within four months, she paid back the loan and took out an additional GHs 400 (\$104), which she used to expand her business into bulk purchases and cassava retail, a dream she had previously been unable to pursue.

For Patience, engagement in *Tisung Taba* made credit accessible and afforded her the rare opportunity to expand her business and increase profits. According to Patience, "*I used to make a profit of about GHs 70 (\$18) a month and could not save [it,] because I spend all of it on my family's upkeep. But when I took the GHs 200 (\$52) loan and began my trade in palm oil, my profits rose to over GHs 100 (\$26) a month. After taking my second loan and extending into cassava trade, I now make about GHs 200 (\$52) of profit every month. This is over two*

times my initial earnings [and] I feel I am progressing.” She now sees VSLAs as an opportunity for women to start and expand economic activities and improve their livelihoods. Through over 800 VSLAs created by RING and over 20,000 members of these groups in northern Ghana, women are now economically empowered to become financially independent and build more resilient households.

Battling Gender Barriers in Pursuit of Rural Development

The rural north is largely conservative in comparison to other parts of Ghana. While men and women routinely fraternize socially, when it comes to professional occupations, they are vastly relegated to standard gender roles – men as the breadwinners of the households and women taking care of family needs and domestic work. As the Director of Community Development and the Gender Desk Officer of the Gushegu District Assembly, Mrs. Ruby Osman is one of just a handful of women in a district leadership position in the Northern Region. Though attitudes are slowly changing, she is often seen as bucking against the trend. **“It’s not easy to be a woman in [my position] – even with the support I have from the district leaders, there is still intimidation, name-calling and pressure from subordinates,”** she explains. Because of her leadership role and the authority with which she carries herself, Mrs. Ruby has been called a witch, and even had her life threatened. But she hails from the Northern Region capital of Tamale and realizes the importance of her work in the rural communities and continues her efforts, undaunted.

Before the USAID Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Project, there was no funding for Mrs. Ruby and her team to fulfill their basic responsibilities, she and her team had to be incredibly resourceful to get any work done. She often took on consultancies, lobbied NGOs, and even did catering jobs to raise funds so that her department could engage with communities to identify their needs, start women’s associations and facilitate funding access to women agribusiness groups. Even with the additional effort, it often wasn’t enough to keep the momentum of community development moving. Through RING, Mrs. Ruby and her team were brought on board to support community and identify and mobilize vulnerable households for the project. Once established and respected in the targeted communities, there was no stopping her.



Photo 41 Mrs. Ruby Osman (R) facilitating a GDO training session on conflict management best

Since the project’s inception in the district, Mrs. Ruby and her team have played a supporting role in the implementation of numerous community interventions, such as Village Savings and Loans Associations, Community Led Total Sanitation, and nutrition and hygiene mass media activities (durbars). In addition, Mrs. Ruby has been able to lead shea nut collection activities and gender mainstreaming efforts in the district, including sensitizing her fellow male staff on the need for gender considerations in development programming, and facilitating community education sessions on mitigating conflict and emphasizing women’s economic empowerment for overall household improvement.

According to Mrs. Ruby, development projects like RING, which promote several interventions that will diversify women’s income streams, will go a long way to ensure that women can gain more bargaining power and equity in the

household when it comes to decision-making that will affect them and their children. Recognizing the need for this shift in gender dynamics, Mrs. Ruby will continue to lobby for activities that put women on more equal footing with the hope that the next generation of men and women— whether they work on farms or in the professional sector – will understand and appreciate one another’s unique contribution to the overall development of their society, their community and their households.

8. Areas for Improvement, Lessons Learned, and Challenges

As RING activities implementation is on-going through Regional and MMDA partners, Global Communities RING continues to take stock of areas for improvement, challenges to overcome and lessons to learn from. This process of continual reflection and adjustment has resulted in improved implementation and monitoring support strategies and in data collection. Key examples of challenges and lessons learned are detailed below:

8.1. Unanticipated Mucuna Performance

Global Communities RING and other project partners are working on a number of pilots at the moment and, while some are in nutrition, WASH and governance, the majority are implemented under the Agriculture and Livelihoods umbrella. The soil improvement pilot is one of great interest for the year as the results may be the most sustainable for small holder farmers, given the low costs associated with the interventions and their potential impact if carried out correctly, and the tremendous need for rejuvenating the depleted northern soils. One of the techniques the RING Project promotes is the intercropping of pigeon peas and mucuna, for both nitrogen-fixing aspects, as well as cover cropping.

One unforeseen challenge that has emerged is the climbing nature of the aggressive mucuna plant. Though the technical team waited to sow until after the pigeon pea had established itself well, the fast-growing plant seems to be taking over many plots, choking out the pigeon pea to a point where pods might not be harvested. This is especially challenging given the household reluctance to lock up any amount of land for something other than food, which was why pigeon pea was included in the pilot to begin with. The Agriculture and Livelihoods Team will continue to monitor each of the demonstration sites, as well as liaise with UDS, to determine how best to manage the plant so that both crops will thrive. Or alternatively drop the mucuna as a viable plant and focus on the pigeon peas.

8.2. Accessibility to Communities

By design, RING Project target beneficiaries are the most vulnerable households in the most deprived communities. While there may be political and tribal issues that lead to the neglect of some communities, the majority of villages selected to benefit from RING were deemed ‘deprived’ because they were inaccessible during parts of the year. A strategy for many districts early on was to target interventions for nearby communities to ensure they could be monitored regularly and be provided with the necessary support.

As implementation expands across all districts, however, some of the more inaccessible communities have now been targeted for interventions. In Nanumba South and North Gonja for instance, several communities are cut off by rivers that swell during the rainy season and become impassable. Field teams have managed to overcome this challenge thus far by making use of canoes⁷⁶ or simply driving around the rivers, which often adds multiple hours to the outreach effort.

⁷⁶ Nanumba South procured one canoe in 2014 and North Gonja plans to also procure one in 2017.

Though it may not solve all challenges, Global Communities RING has emphasized the importance of posting staff to the Area Councils and ensuring they have the necessary equipment and logistical support to implement household trainings and conduct routine monitoring. This would significantly reduce the need for staff based in the district capital to make such long trips for a training in a single community. Additionally, for those locations not cut off by rivers, posting staff in the Area Councils still brings service delivery closer to the people by reducing the distance between the Assembly and the communities. For activities such as CLTS, which requires intensive monitoring visits, relying on sub-district staff to implement the activities is a better way to deliver field support more effectively and efficiently.

Clustering interventions in certain hard to reach areas for ease of training over a period of several days may also be a solution, depending on the intervention and the needs of the communities.

8.3. Securing Seeds for Certain Activities

Though soybean seed has been a challenge to access in the past, Global Communities RING has found a good system in communicating project needs early to the Regional Seed Unit (RSU) in order to reserve needed quantities for fulfill the requests of all MMDAs. For plants like mucuna and groundnut, however, this is not an option as the RSU carries neither.

Thanks to the USAID/Groundnut Scaling Project, Global Communities RING was able to secure the appropriate quantities of quality groundnut seed for the districts carrying out the pilot in 2016. Though there were groundnuts available on the open market, these nuts are often not stored properly, are not suitable as seeds, and tend to develop toxic molds, such as aflatoxin, which is linked to stunting. Global Communities RING seeks to minimize the presence of aflatoxins in groundnuts to ensure that beneficiary households eat the most nutritious foods.

With mucuna, the Team has looked on the open market for nearly two years, but was never able to find commercial quantities. Fortunately, the USAID/ATT Project had a sufficient amount to support the RING soil improvement pilot for 2016. Widespread use in 2017 is still under revision and awaiting the results of the 2016 pilot. Mucuna has grown too rapidly and quickly became invasive in the pilot sites, hampering the growth of the pigeon pea. If Global Communities RING concludes that mucuna is a viable cover crop, an agreement could be reached with UDS to use the OFSP vine multiplication sites to plant mucuna after the OFSP vines are pulled out.

8.4. Navigating Implementation around the Political Season

Though no major issues have surfaced so far, the Global Communities RING Team remains aware of the possible effects of the upcoming presidential elections on project implementation as the year ends. To limit potential challenges, the Team is working steadily with each partner district to ensure that activities with the most potential for disruption (i.e. small ruminants, major repairs to water supply mechanisms, etc.) are completed or well under way with only minimal follow-up activities remaining before the December 7th election date.

8.5. Engagement with Regional Partners

2016 saw a substantial increase in the number of stakeholders involved in the consolidated regional work plan. Though the RPCU has been a consistent leader from the outset, the NRHD and REHSD had also carried out activities in 2015. With the addition of Community Development, Social Development and Agriculture into the initial work plan and budget, there were high hopes for each regional office to capitalize on RING funding available to fulfill their mandates of providing technical support and regular monitoring for their district counterparts.

The Community Development Unit began the implementation of their work plan quickly, carrying out scheduled trainings for district officers on improved community entry skills, group formation, financial literacy education and defining their roles within the District Assembly. However, Agriculture and Social Development were more difficult to engage, as competing interests made RING less of a priority. Through consistent engagement with each department contact person – directly and through the RPCU – the situation improved, with RAD carrying out several of its planned trainings for the year and Social Development carrying out one of its major activities – a TOT on Social Protection and Poverty Graduation.⁷⁷

8.6. Efficacy of Multi-Purpose Workshops

After discussion with Global Communities RING and last-minute changes to the schedule, the Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit carried out a joint 2016 mid-year review along with the 2017 annual work planning session. The session was split into three rounds of two-day meetings, with district attendance based on geographic zones that Global Communities RING had previously defined to provide technical support in the most efficient manner.

Though the two days were packed with review and planning activities, all officers attending seemed engaged throughout. The limited downtime reduced previous challenges of DA staff leaving certain sessions to run work-related or personal errands in town. The combination of review and planning efforts also led to districts making a direct connection from the stock taking they had done on successes and challenges so far this year and how they should relate to the next year's plans. By the close of the workshop, all districts had a solid AWP development plan.

In the future, Global Communities RING suggests that complementary meetings be held jointly where possible. This will not only increase the efficacy of the meeting, but will reduce costs and time spent out of districts by key personnel.

9. Plans and Areas of Emphasis for the Coming Quarter

In the coming quarter, Global Communities RING will continue to build upon the successes and initiatives begun in FY16 across all technical component areas. Priorities for the year include reaching scale on key activities – VSLA and OFSP cultivation, and CLTS and MTMSG in certain districts. Data gathering and analysis on past activities will also be a priority as the project has now reached a point where critical interventions – such as small ruminants – can be adequately evaluated against its intended results.

With these goals in mind, plans for the coming quarter across each technical component are as follows.

9.1. Component One Focal Areas

The Agriculture and Livelihoods Team will largely focus their efforts in the coming quarter on seasonal activities related to harvesting and storage of produce. In addition, Agriculture and Livelihoods will coordinate with the M&E Team to analyze data from a number of monitoring efforts, including small ruminants and yield data from the harvests. Details are found below.

- Examining potential areas for collaboration with numerous USAID IPs, such as the Coastal Sustainable Landscape Project (VSLA) and the Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (soil improvement, VSLA and live fencing);
- Harvesting support and yield data gathering for soybeans, groundnut, and OFSP;

⁷⁷ Depending on the timeline for completing the M&E support strategy for the region, Social Development's outstanding 2016 planned activity of creating a database of children's home and children's service centers in the region may be rolled into the development of the overall regional M&E database.

- Instituting VSLA scale-up across all districts – including district work plans and Global Communities RING Top Up Support;
- Cultivating leafy green vegetables via drip irrigation across select districts – according to work plans and Global Communities RING Top Up Support;
- Monitoring small ruminant progress, including data gathering for births, mortalities and sales, qualitative interviews on how the money was spent and who retained control, and informational analysis on the numbers;
- Rolling out improved grain storage across select districts – according to work plans and Global Communities RING Top Up Support;
- Continuing supportive monitoring of the poultry pilot across all implementing districts and critical analysis of best practices for 2017 rollout;
- Promoting nutrition sensitive crop consumption, along with the Nutrition Team – to be achieved through utilization trainings across all districts for both soybeans and OFSP;
- Exploring options for upcoming beekeeping pilot in select districts;
- Continuing monitoring of the soil improvement pilot and evaluation for scale-up in 2017; and
- Supporting the RAD for completion of their 2016 work plan.

9.2. Component Two Focal Areas

In the coming quarter, the Nutrition Team will continue to focus on improved quality across delivery of all technical interventions, including CMAM, ICYF, ENA, anemia, and supportive monitoring visits. The Team will also continue its support to districts implementing pilot efforts, such as QI and the overlap of VSLA and MTMSGs. Additional details are found below.

- Continuing technical support across all districts for monitoring and supervision visits from the district to sub-district levels and the sub-district to community levels;
- Providing technical assistance to districts undertaking MTMSG formation and layering with the VLSA intervention;
- Continuing provision of technical assistance toward the delivery of key anemia capacity building trainings for both health workers and community health volunteers;
- Coordinating with each of the RING technical units to ensure appropriate nutrition messaging is integrated in relevant activities;
- Documenting relevant nutrition success stories for final development under the SBCC Unit; and
- Continuing efforts under the Quality Improvement Pilot to ensure facilities meet the minimum standard for nutrition service delivery.

As the dry season approaches, the WASH Team will embark on seasonal efforts, such as delivery of technical support for borehole and latrine repairs and rainwater harvesting installation (base construction is a dry-season activity). The Team will also continue to scale-up efforts under CLTS in support of the regional goal for ODF certification for the region by the close of 2017. Details on additional activities can be found below.

- Scaling up CLTS rollout and providing the necessary technical trainings in selected districts;
- Coordinating with the REHSD to facilitate an ODF verification protocol training for selected districts and their DICCS;
- Expanding the current Natural Leaders Network pilot in East Mamprusi, Gushegu, Karaga and Saboba Districts;
- Strengthening community validation efforts for ODF Basic achievements;

- Procuring and distributing Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation toolkits to all partner districts to support community hygiene and sanitation education;
- Developing a WASH service provider and standard commodity prices guide for distribution to all partner districts;
- Supporting borehole and latrine rehabilitation validation and repairs; and
- Rolling out the time saving technology pilot in conjunction with Governance and District Gender Desk Officers.

9.3. Component Three Focal Areas

The Governance Team will focus efforts in the coming quarter on the provision of continued support to ongoing activities, such as district sub-structure strengthening, as well as assist districts to complete their 2016 work plans, many of which have Component 3 activities outstanding. Facilitation and quality assurance for Social Protection Trainings across all districts will be a major effort for the team, as well as preparation for FY17 Q2 activities, such as the development of district sign boards for work plans and budgets. Routine efforts, such as leading the 2017 work plan development process, invoicing development and monitoring support, liquidation report reviews, and finalization of 2017 sub-contracts with the Grants and Contracts Team will be undertaken as well. Additional details can be found below.

- Continuing current district sub-structure strengthening pilot and start-up of effort in new districts;
- Rolling out Community Score Card via Area Council Members pilot in East Mamprusi, as well as delivering technical support to districts undertaking the activity via consultancy;
- Examining potential areas for collaboration with other USAID IPs, such as the USAID/Northern Ghana Governance Project;
- Preparing for Gender Model Family pilot, including drafting a Terms of Reference for a local organization to carry out the regional TOT;
- Facilitating select sessions during Social Protection Trainings at the district level, in conjunction with district officers and the RDSD;
- Continuing community engagement strengthening efforts, including a focus on incorporating CAPs information and input from Town Halls and Collaborative Planning and Budget Meetings into upcoming MTDP development;
- Conducting a transition support workshop for subcontracted districts shifting to the G2G funding mechanism;
- Following up on FAR completion and submission by all districts, and reviewing 2017 AWP drafts against the information in the FAR;
- Supporting all G2G districts with audit preparation and addressing subsequent findings;
- Initiating Host Country Contribution tracking pilot in West Gonja district;
- Invoicing and monitoring support for all 2016 subcontracted districts;
- Providing support to all districts and the NRCC during 2017 Annual Work Plan development;

9.4. Other Focal Areas

In addition to the various technical areas of focus, Global Communities RING provides other cross-cutting support for SBCC, M&E, and engagement with the US Peace Corps and other voluntary organizations. A summary of those plans is captured below.

Key activities for SBCC in FY17 Q1:

In the coming quarter, the SBCC Unit will continue to work on efforts begun in 2016, including finalizing best practice and activity implementation guides, coordinating with other USAID IPs on SBCC-related matters, and working with the RING Programs Team to incorporate the appropriate SBCC messages into their technical support. Additionally, the SBCC Unit will coordinate with the Governance Team to initiate transparency efforts (i.e. district budget and work plan sign boards), as well as local media houses to increase the reach of key RING messages. Details on each planned activity can be found below.

- Developing district sign boards for 2017 budgets and placement of interventions;
- Printing and distributing agriculture best practice guides to districts undertaking key agriculture activities in FY17 Q1;
- Printing and distributing the RING Activity Implementation Guide;
- Conducting joint site visits to intervention communities with select local media houses;
- Finalizing a RING media engagement strategy;
- Liaising with technical units and the M&E Team to identify areas for success stories;
- Continuing to coordinate with other USAID IPs to ensure behavior change messages are consistent, compatible, and complementary.

Key activities for M&E in FY17 Q1:

The M&E Unit will continue efforts begun in FY16 throughout the end of the 2016 calendar year, including entry of community and household beneficiary data into the RING project database, Ghanalinks platform and the AID Tracker system. The Unit will also provide facilitation support on key district M&E trainings and provide coaching for selected departments on improving their monitoring and reporting quality. In addition, the M&E Unit collaborate with other technical departments to finalize the survey tool for the RING Beneficiary Survey and determine the scope of work for the METSS team to carry out the effort in early FY17 Q2. Additional details on planned activities for the coming quarter can be found below.

- Supporting the NRCC build and manage their own monitoring database;
- Conducting joint monitoring visits with regional departments to improving monitoring quality to decentralized departments;
- Conducting spot-checks on data reported;
- Continuing entry of backlog and incoming information into the RING database;
- Completing AID Tracker entry for the fiscal year;
- Finalizing SOW and survey instrument for METSS and the RING Beneficiary Survey;
- Supporting district partners with GIS data entry into the RING Collect application and sharing information with other USAID IPs via the Ghanalinks platform;
- Assisting MMDAs to report data on implemented activities in a quality and timely manner;
- Aiding MMDAs in collecting quality and reliable data on performance indicators; and
- Identifying areas of interest for potential success stories based on households and community data received.

Key activities for US Peace Corps partnership in FY17 Q1:

The current third year PCV will close out his service in the coming quarter and in preparation for his departure, he will work with his supervisors within Global Communities RING to outline a new scope of work for one, possibly two, incoming third year volunteers. Global Communities

RING will coordinate with Peace Corps Ghana to disseminate the SOW to volunteers who are preparing to close their service, but may be interested in staying on for a third year. Areas of focus will be continued OFSP cultivation support, as well as VLSA integration and leafy green vegetable cultivation (where drip irrigation can be supported). The project may expand on its partnership with third-year Peace Corps Volunteers by developing a nutrition-based position with part-time WASH duties (especially CLTS, which is an intervention also promoted by Peace Corps Ghana), though this option is still in the preliminary development stages. Global Communities RING hopes to have a new volunteer in place by early- to mid-January.

Key activities for potential partnership with AgriCorps in FY17 Q1:

In addition to a partnership with Peace Corps, Global Communities RING has begun exploring potential areas for collaboration with the volunteer group AgriCorps. Similar to Peace Corps, AgriCorps Fellows (ACF) are stationed in rural communities with a focus on supporting farmers to undertake sustainable farming practices. This mostly comes in collaboration with junior high and high schools through the 4-H Club partnership, though many ACFs work with farmers groups outside their school-age counterparts. AgriCorps may be another conduit to distribute OFSP vines, as well as layer VSLA activities. The only drawback is that currently ACFs are only in place for one year, which limits their ability to see the OFSP cultivation through to the end. Planting and management support will be possible, but harvesting and utilization would need to be taken over by either Global Communities RING, or, ideally, the District Assembly through their Agriculture Extension Agents. Though the latter is the ideal scenario, Global Communities RING experienced some challenges with this collaborative approach under the Peace Corps partnership in 2016. Many district officials did not see the additional sites as their responsibility, so timely monitoring support was often lacking. We will keep this in mind as we move forward with discussion with AgriCorps in the coming quarter.

10. ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A – Community Score Card Concept Note

CSC Concept Note for EMDA

Introduction and Background

Given that East Mamprusi District (Gbintiri Area Council) has benefitted from the GC RING District Substructure Strengthening pilot in 2016 and has shown promising strides in continuing those efforts, the GC RING Governance Team feels the district would also be a perfect candidate for the pilot trial of the Community Score Card rollout.

The CSC approach is designed to solicit constructive feedback from community members on services rendered by the District Assembly. The survey itself should be developed in conjunction with the DA and can be formulated to suit a variety of needs – in the case of RING, it would be developed in a way that would capture information on how various RING interventions had been targeted, implemented and followed up on. The CSC intervention could be implemented in two ways – either through direct implementation by the district, or via an independent agency providing community feedback to the DA for subsequent action. In an ideal scenario, the DA itself would be genuinely interested in constructive criticism/feedback from their constituents. However, to counteract any biases or potential conflict as a result of the feedback, an independent agency is oftentimes brought in to carry out the field work. This independent agency will then report unfiltered results back to the DA, as well as facilitate interface sessions between citizens and service providers (DA inclusive) for subsequent action.

In the case of EMDA, however, GC RING feels that the district leadership has the genuine interest in soliciting feedback from the various benefitting communities, and the Planning and Coordinating Unit has the capacity to implement it via the Area Council and Unit Committee members that were previously trained. While the CSC is often carried out at the community level, GC RING feels that the district is in a unique position to seek more informed feedback at the Area Council level from A/C and Unit Committee members (i.e. *community representatives*) who, now after their recent trainings through the substructure strengthening pilot, will have a more realistic picture of what the DA is actually supposed to do. When they provide their feedback, it will be more constructive given that they have a better idea of what the DA's services to the community should be.

Roll Out Process

According to the approved plan/budget, EMDA has extensive funding available to carry out the intervention. The current budget under the 'Participatory Monitoring Plan' activity contains support for:

- M&E plan formation meeting;
- CSC training for community members; and
- Community visits.

Should the district opt to go with the GC RING suggestion of utilizing the Area Councils to roll out the CSC approach, this budget could be realigned to suit the various needs. The GC RING team would develop the CSC tool alongside the district, then aid in administering it via the Gbintiri Area Council. If the results are positive, the district may choose to continue the CSC efforts in other Area Councils by incorporating it into capacity building efforts included in the 2017 work plans.

ATTACHMENT B – Monitoring Report Example (invoicing and general)

FIELD MONITORING VISITS TO NORTH GONJA, WEST GONJA & CENTRAL GONJA
(7TH TO 9TH SEPTEMBER 2016)**Prepared by:** Eric Maasole**Date:** 13th September 2016**Purpose of Trip, Scope Of Work And Key Objectives:****BACKGROUND & PURPOSE**

As the Governance Coordinator for the Zone, I embarked on field monitoring visits to North Gonja, West Gonja and Central Gonja Districts to acquaint myself of the implementation processes in these Districts and to provide technical support to the implementing departments. I visited three out of six Districts in my Zone, starting from the 7th to 9th September 2016. Key findings and issues addressed during the visits are as follows.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND KEY FINDINGS**NORTH GONJA DISTRICT**

As part of the invoice monitoring, I spot-checked a number of activities in the District. On the way to the District capital, I made a stopover to monitor small ruminants in Tachali Lorto. Interactions with beneficiaries revealed they were trained on small ruminants management and salt licks supplied to them. Generally, the ruminants were in good health and a number of them have lambed. Beneficiaries were entreated to take good care of them to ensure they multiply before they can begin to sell them to meet urgent household financial needs.

Considering the poor state of most roads in North Gonja during the rainy season, I managed to visit two health facilities i.e. Lingbinsi and Daboya Health Centres to acquaint myself of how community outreach activities were being carried out and the support the DHMT provides to the facilities. Interactions with both facilities revealed that the DHMT support them with fuel under the RING intervention (CHPS Compound/Health Centers strengthening) and frequently embark on mentoring and monitoring visits to these facilities. Most soybeans communities at the time of the visit were not accessible but the Governance Advisor indicated that all beneficiaries have been supported with ploughing and inputs distribution and distribution list submitted to RING.

WEST GONJA DISTRICT

A three member team comprising the District Nutrition Officer, the Governance Coordinator and Governance Advisor randomly visited the Achubunyor CHPS Compound to interact with the health workers at post. Interactions with the in-charge revealed the kind of support they receive from the DHMT i.e. fuel. A number of challenges were also raised, such as inadequate funding for outreach activities and mobility as the only motorbike is not in good shape.

After the monitoring visit, the District Technical Team (16 member team) was supported to review their draft Annual Workplan and Budget (AWP&B). The team worked assiduously to fine-tune the plan by revising the quantities and frequencies, guided by departmental ceilings. The meeting provided an opportunity to explain the rationale or strategy of implementation of some of the menu activities.

Following up on the community score card and Sub district structure strengthening with the Planning Officer, he indicated a memo has been submitted and approved for the procurement of a local Civil Society Organization (CSO). So far, three CSOs have been earmarked and an Expression of Interest (EOI) will be developed and shared to enable them to submit their

technical and financial proposals for consideration, review and selection. The sample TOR and implementation guidelines have been shared with the GA and District Planning Officer to guide the preparatory process. However, the activity has been scheduled for the last quarter (October to November).

On the sub district structures strengthening, the 3 Area Councils have been trained on the local government system with a focus on the roles and responsibilities of the Area Councils and revenue mobilization. The area councils have also organized their second quarter meetings in August 2016. ***For the remaining governance activities, the DPO was entreated to speed up their implementation.***

CENTRAL GONJA DISTRICT

I held review session with the District Technical Team with a focus on the WASH and VSLA activities. Concerns were raised about the quality of implementation of the water related activities such as the dam desilting, borehole repairs/WSMT training and rainwater harvesting facilities. The District Engineer indicated he was not even aware there were a budget lines for slow sand filtration and first flush diverter for rainwater harvesting facilities and moreover, he was not conversant with the first flush diverter. ***He was entreated to ensure constant communication with the RING WASH Team for technical assistance, especially with the installation of the rainwater harvesting facilities.***

[Note: this officer was recently transferred to the district and may not have had the detailed budget; however, the WASH Team at GC RING have had several engagements with the DWST on this matter, but the team continues to pose challenges in terms of follow through on technical advice]

On VSLA, the BAC submitted a memo for a top up of funds to pay for the VSLA inputs. However, a quick review of the memo revealed they were buying a box with all accessories for Ghc614.00, which was way above the price (i.e. Ghc256.00) RING recently procured for the subcontracted Districts. The DA was advised to hold on and conduct further verification and possible negotiation with the supplier for price reduction. ***In view of this, I will recommend the Livelihoods Team collate prices of VSLA boxes from the various vendors in order to come out with a fix price for VSLA boxes. This is necessary because of the varying prices Districts procure the boxes.***

[Note: this has since been done – all common livelihoods & agriculture, and WASH inputs have been consolidated to a suggested vendor list with average prices, and locations of stores selling those items; both lists have been distributed to each of the MMDAs to support in the 2017 AWP&B preparations]

On CHPS compound/health centre strengthening, I made a stopover at Yapei to interact with staff of the health center and to enquire about outreach activities carried out with RING funding. Interactions revealed that financial support is provided by the DHMT on a quarterly basis to enable them to embark on health outreach activities. Aside that, the DHMT frequently embark on facility monitoring visits.