

REPORT ON 7TH MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM MEETING



7th Multistakeholder Platform Meeting Report

Event Date: 12th September 2023

Report Written by: Kingsley Twumasi

Background

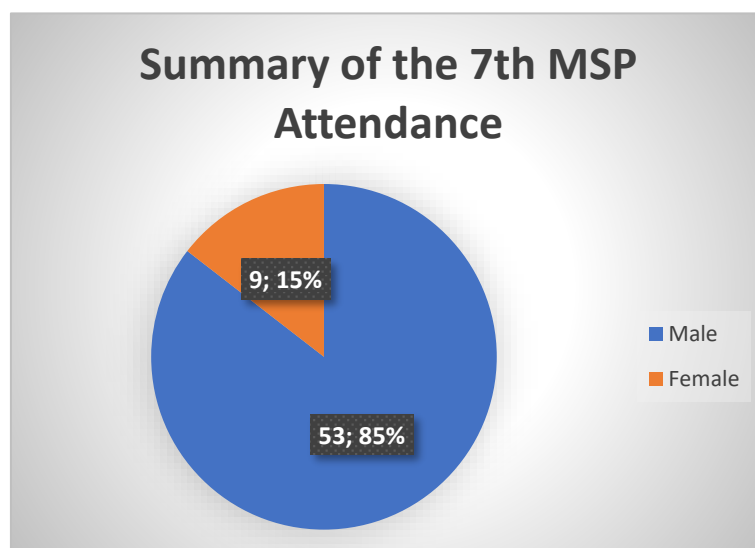
The Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) was created under the project titled “Atebubu and Wiase Forest Landscape Restoration: A living laboratory for people and ecosystem resilience” to monitor the progress of, and receive feedback on the project implementation. The project is receiving funding from Astra Zeneca and implemented by NGPTA, NDF, and APSD. The 5-year project aims at restoring degraded land areas and improving the livelihoods of farmers engaged in the project. This platform gives the opportunity for the voices of the project beneficiaries (farmers) to be heard and to address challenges encountered during the implementation phase of the project. Again, foreseeable hazards that may retard the success of the project are discussed to find practicable solutions. Previously, the NDF had organised Six (6) MSP meetings to address urgent issues on the project. This MSP meeting is organised to update and address issues of the project especially fire issues to protect the project farms from fire outbreaks in the dry season (1st November to 31st March).

Introduction

This report covers a one-day multi-stakeholder platform meeting to follow up on pending issues, update participants on progress of on the agroforestry and natural forest restoration and to address emerging and recurrent issues such as fire prevention and management during the dry season. The meeting was organized on the 12th of September 2023 at the Assembly Hall of the Atebubu Municipal Assembly.

Attendance

The meeting was well attended by sixty-two (62) participants of whom fifty-three (53) representing 85% were males and nine (9) representing 15% were females. The participants were made up of the Farmers, District Assemblies, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Wildlife Division, Ghana Fire Service – Wiase Stationed and the Forest Service Division, APSD, NGPTA and NDF. ***Attached as annexe_1 is a copy of the participant sheet. See the chart below for a summary of the attendance.***



Welcome Address

Mr. Mustapha Seidu who is the Director of the Nature and Development Foundation welcomed participants present at the meeting by attesting that this is another opportunity to come together for the seventh time to discuss and assess the progress of the ongoing project. He also mentioned that this particular meeting was going to discuss issue of fire prevention and management because the dry season normally starts in October while our next meeting is schedule for late November. Fire having been part of the lifestyle of the people of the savannah landscape, its prevention and management is a daunting task but a necessary precursor to increasing the people and the ecosystem. This meeting is to emphasize to all farmers who are part of the project on how to control and protect farmlands from fire outbreak and update the progress of project implementation. He encouraged all participants to pay maximum attention to every detail discussed and contribute fully to make the meeting fruitful. When the participants finished the routine introduction, it was realised that several of them were participating for the first time. This means that there might not be consistency to the learning process. Mr. Seidu drew the attention of the NGPTA to emphasis to farmers to participate consistently and if for some reasons they are unable to participate, the community should get a replacement.

Setting the Context by Mr. Mustapha Seidu

Mr. Mustapha Seidu introduced the concept of the project to the participants by saying the objective of the Atebubu-Wiase Land Restoration project is to mitigate climate change and improve the livelihoods of the farmers engaged in the project areas. Continuing, He mentioned that climate change has disrupted food availability, quality, and quantity. It has also caused changes in precipitation patterns, changes in extreme weather events and reduction in water availability which result in reduced agricultural productivity. It is therefore important for farmers to adapt to climate change. One sure way of doing that is the planting of tree crops with commercial value such as cashew and mango. On the subject matter of the bushfire, Mr Seidu said that fire outbreaks is a common sight during the dry season in the Atebubu-Wiase Landscape. Many farmers have lost farm properties due to fire outbreaks largely caused by careless bush burning by hunters, herdsmen burning for fresh grass, cooking in farms, and slashing and burning. There is a need for this project with the support of farmers and all stakeholders present to prevent or significantly reduced the incidences of bushfire in the landscape.

Mr. Seidu intorudced participants to the concept of carbon and the way trees act as carbon sequesters and the market linked to such natural systems. He further added that in future, this carbon credit and value market system could bring additional income to farmers. He mentioned that, there is an upcoming event in November on carbon credit component of the project. This event is proposed to happen on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of November which all project beneficiaries will have the opportunity to attend to understand what carbon credit is, its importance and how they stand to benefit in the future. He added that prior to that event, there will be community engagement by some of the project partners and the details for

event will be duly communicated. The fire service officers are invited to this meeting to present how to control and protect farmlands from fire outbreaks during the dry season.

Presentation on Fire Management

Mr. Zakaria Kabore, the rural fire coordinator from the Ghana National Fire Service – Atebubu Municipal Assembly, who appeared with his District Commander, made a brief presentation on fire management. He started with the types of fire which are domestic, industrial, and Bush fire. In his presentation, he said that bushfires are used as land management tools in many rural settings, even though they cause havoc to life, properties, land, and the environment if not controlled. Mr Kabore was excited to inform the participants that, since the meeting and training on bushfires under this ongoing project, bushfire cases has reduced in the Atebubu-Wiase Landscape. He again mentioned that the control and prevention of bushfires Act 1990, PNDCL 229, bans bush burning activities in the dry season. He elaborated that cooking in the farm, hunting of animals, possessing any fire ignition tool in and around the farm during the dry season (November to March) is prohibited and culprits will be dealt with under the law severely. Offenders of the bush fire law will be fined, jailed, or sentenced to communal labour. He again educated the participants on the causes of bush fire in the Atebubu-Wiase enclave and how to control or prevent bushfires. Ending his presentation, he urged all participants to comply with the bush fire law in the dry season (November to March) to protect and keep the farmlands from fire outbreaks which can cause massive destruction to properties. Farmers were asked to be each other's keeper at the time of the dry season to keep and protect farms free from fire outbreaks. He mentioned that as an institution, they in collaboration with the various District Assemblies are already forming Fire Volunteers in each community within the Municipality. When such individuals are trained, they will be provided with Fire Volunteer Identification Card. He urged the project to collaborate with them to expand the scope of the fire volunteer formation and to have a regional recognition of the project activities on fire prevention and amangement.

Causes of Bush Fire in Atebubu-Wiase enclave

Three causes of bush fire in the Atebubu-Wiase enclave were identified during the meeting which are:

1. Slash and burn agriculture
2. Animal hunting or group hunting
3. Herdsmen (Fulani) burn bushes for the growth of fresh grass to feed their cattle.

Measures Adopted to Control Fire Outbreak.

1. Setting up a fire volunteer team in each community to monitor farm activities during the dry season.
2. Banning all burning activities within the dry season period (November to March)
3. Creating fire belts 20 metres apart around farms to prevent fire from reaching the farmland.
4. The Ghana fire service in collaboration with the Ghana police service in Atebubu-Wiase will strictly enforce the ban on bush burning and sanction anyone who offends the law accordingly in the dry season.

Update from NGPTA

Moro Seidu, one of the community liaison field officers for NGPTA presented the update of the project implementation on the agroforestry component of the project. In his presentation, he stated that by end of 2023 the project is expected to supply 45,433 Mango Keith and Kent, 50,835 Mango Jafran, 54,646 Cashew, 4,206 Coconut and 57,416 Wood trees to project beneficiaries. Continuing, he said that about 90% of project beneficiaries have been supplied the planting materials requested. The reasons for the 10% shortfall could be due to farm not available to receive the planting materials and new farmers yet to have their farms map to receive the required planting materials.

He also mentioned that selected lead farmers have been trained by the Crop Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) in Kumasi to build their capacity in agroforestry management. Newly recruited farmers are committed to the project by subjecting a portion of land owned by the farmer to the project which will be mapped for monitoring purposes by the NGPTA field officers. He added that planting the timber seedlings is compulsory and must be installed along the boundaries of the project farm. Currently, the project has covered about 854 farm plots translating to 1,175.3 hectares. This farm data is updated whenever there is an addition. Ending his presentation, he urged the community members and traditional authorities to support the implementation of the project to yield the expected results.

Attached as Annexe_2 is the power point presentation.

Challenges Encountered

- Flooding of farms planted with cashew and mango seedlings.
- Increased mortality rate of planted seedlings in waterlogged project areas.
- Inaccessibility of farms due to flooding reducing the quality of farm monitoring.

Updates from APSD

Mr. Sledge Adokoh from APSD updated participants on the progress of the natural plantation component of the project. He said that APSD currently has planted 2.7 million timber trees (Ofram, Dawadawa, Mahogany and Ceiba). Continuing, he said farmers were entreated during the last meeting to come to APSD for free timber seedlings to plant but unfortunately, none of the farmers took that opportunity to plant the timber seedlings. Farmers came to APSD to get about 1,500 fruit trees (Mangoes) to plant which the farmers were grateful for the supply. Ending his update, he said that APSD will continue to plant timber trees in their conservation areas to meet its prime target and the opportunity is still available for interested farmers to get free timber trees to plant.

Below were some of the questions asked by participants and the corresponding answers provided.

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
Will there be a monitoring team to check or follow up to know if the planting materials are planted on project sites?	Frequent monitoring on project sites will be executed by the field officers from NGPTA.

Is the project going to replace seedlings that don't survive after planting?	Yes, the field monitoring officers will ensure that dead seedlings are replaced.
Can a project beneficiary request for extra planting materials after exhausting the already committed land for the project?	Provided there is land available and the farmer owns the land, the field officers will conduct a due diligence to add that land to the project and supply planting materials for establishment.

Suggestions

Participants present made some key contributions that must be considered in the successful implementation of the project going forward. Below are some of the comments made by the participants:

- As far as practicable, stakeholders should be involved, at least once a year, in field monitoring to boost the confidence of stakeholders participating in the project implementation.
- The project should adopt other environmental and economical seedlings that can withstand excessive water during the rainy season in the waterlogged areas.
- The project should work hand in hand with other key-stakeholders that are experts in agriculture and forestry to enhance the quality implementation of the project.
- The project should adopt planting bamboo in the waterlogged areas which has environmental and economic importance to humans.
- The project should provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to fire volunteers to ensure their safety fighting against fire outbreak in the project landscape.
- The project adopts purchasing soil test kits to aid in selecting areas suitable for planting materials selected for planting under the project.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the workshop was well-organised and successful. Participants understood that fire outbreaks can cause massive loss of properties if care is not taken, and it is very important to practice fire management during the dry season. Some of the participants attested to losing their farms due to fire outbreaks which could have been prevented. Participants also understood that all uncontrolled bush-burning activities have been banned from the month of November to the month of March under PNDC law 229, 1990 and offenders will be sanctioned. By the end of 2023, the project is expected to supply 45,433 Mango Keith and Kent, 50,835 Mango Jafran, 54,646 Cashew, 4,206 Coconut and 57,416 Wood trees to project beneficiaries. About 2.7 million timber trees (Ofram, Dawadawa, Mahogany and Ceiba) have been planted by the APSD in their conservation areas under the project.

Participants were enthused with the progress of project implementation and the measures identified and adopted to control bush fire in the dry season. Participants pledged to put in their maximum efforts to protect the farmlands from bush fire.

Issues Log and Action Points

Issue	Status	Actions until the next MSP meeting
Communication	Ongoing	How can members help communicate better on project objectives. The project resolved to use Community Information Centers to educate and spread information about the project
Better gender representation	Done. But there is more room for improvement	Women empowerment plan Bring in more female speakers to address their issues
Farmer representatives	Done	NGPTA field staff to help farmers to select their representatives to the MSP
Land Tenure	In progress	NDF, Assembly members and NGPTA team to mediate the impasse between the chiefs and the migrant farmers
Low participation of migrant Farmers	In progress	Same as above
Balance between for crop and tree crops		In the 2 nd quarter MSP, participants suggested some kind of discretionary restrictions to ensure that farmers do not use all available land to plant tree crops.

Gallery





Annexe



PARTICIPANT
SHEET.pdf

Annexe_1



Atebubu & Wiase
FLR_MSP_3_ms.pptx

Annexe_2