

**PROJECT NAME: ATEBUBU WIASE FOREST LANDSCAPE
RESTORATION**



11TH MULTISTAKEHOLDER PLATFORM MEETING REPORT

26TH September 2024

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26TH SEPTEMBER 2024

ATEBUBU - AMANTIN MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY HALL

A REPORT SUBMITTED

BY

NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

TO

INOVALAND

Overview

This report summarises the outcome of a one-day multi-stakeholder platform meeting organised on the 26th of September 2024 at the Atebubu- Amantin Municipal Assembly Hall by the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) in collaboration with the Inovaland and African Plantations for Sustainable Development (APSD).

Background

The Atebubu Wiase Forest Landscape Restoration Project embodies the power of community-led initiatives, fostering ecological and social resilience in Ghana's Bono East Region. Now in its third year, this ambitious project has established a thriving Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP), bringing together diverse stakeholders to share knowledge, skills, and innovations. This inclusive approach ensures that local voices are heard and concerns addressed as the project strives to build resilience among farmers and communities.

The MSP serves as a dynamic forum for discussing project implementation, identifying key issues, and uncovering opportunities for restoration. By engaging all relevant stakeholders, the platform facilitates collaborative problem-solving and informed decision-making. This report captures the essence of the 11th MSP meeting, held on September 26, 2024, at the Atebubu-Amanten Municipal Assembly, where stakeholders gathered to shape the project's future.

Meeting Objectives

1. Addressing Outstanding Concerns: Review and resolve persistent issues from previous Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) meetings, specifically focusing on herdsman's engagement in the MSP.
2. Enhancing Fire Management and Prevention: As the dry season approaches, reiterate and refine strategies for effective fire management and prevention measures.

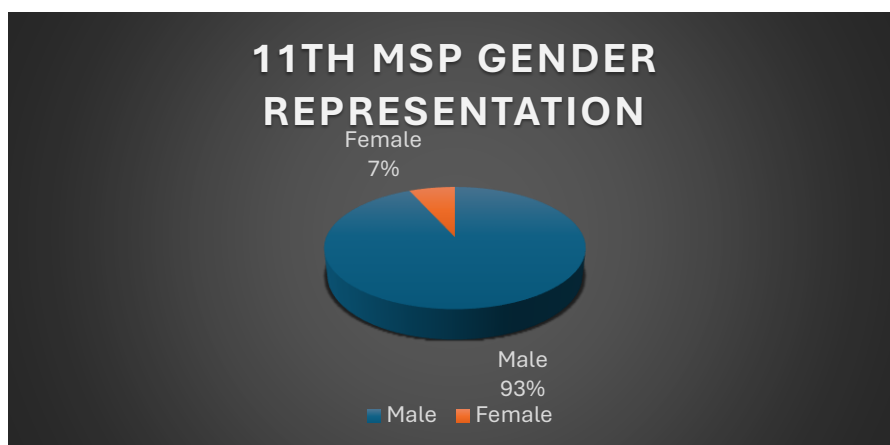
Meeting Details and Attendance

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) meeting was held on September 26, 2024, at the Atebubu Amantin Municipal Assembly Hall, attracting 74 stakeholders. Organisations sent out invitation letters via email/WhatsApp to ensure a strong turnout, made phone calls, and issued daily reminders. Attendees included representatives from various sectors:

- Government Agencies: Coordinating Directorate of Municipal/District Assemblies, Department of Agriculture, Social Welfare Department, District Wildlife Division, Ghana Police and Ghana National Fire Service.
- Community Leaders: Members of the Assembly, Sub Chiefs from Traditional Councils
- Farmer Representatives: Lead farmers
- Project implementing partners: NDF and NGPTA

Notably, the meeting saw a significant imbalance in gender representation, with males comprising 93% (69 attendees) and females only 7% (5 attendees). This disparity echoes broader trends in Ghana, where women's representation in Parliament remains low, at 13.7%. To address this, there will be a need to examine cultural and operational barriers

hindering women's participation in the MSP meetings. *Below is a pie chart summarising the gender representation. **Attached as annexe_1 is a copy of the participant sheet.***



The low female participation in the project activities was extensively discussed in the early part of the project during the 2nd MSP meeting organized on the 1st of June 2022. In that meeting, it was discussed and recognized that the low female participation in the agroforestry intervention is partly cultural and partly structural. Participants suggested the following interventions which should be implemented by the project to increase the number of female participants in the project.

- 1) In the short term, on a case-by-case basis, the names of both the wife and husband are recorded as participating farmers, where both work on the same piece of land.
- 2) On a case-by-case basis, the couple may agree for the wife to be recorded for a portion while the husband is recorded for another.
- 3) In the medium to long-term, the project must institute education on gender empowerment and better opportunities.

In the governance structures, there are equally low number of female participants. The field team must affirmatively select women as lead farmers to ensure increased participation in the MSP since almost all the assembly members and the traditional council representatives are men. The MSP suggestions were brought to the advisory board for discussion and advice was further forwarded to the board for approval and implementation.

Welcome Address

Mr Anthony Owusu, the chairman of the MSP platform, welcomed participants to the meeting. He mentioned that this is the 11th session of the MSP meeting since project inception to address project challenges and inform stakeholders on the project implementation progress. The Atebubu-Wiase Forest Restoration project has been very beneficial to farmers who took the chance to partake and hopefully, the impact to

achieve is gradually felt. He again said that the dry season is almost approaching, and farmers must be on guard to protect their farms from fire incidents. Farm burning is one of the major challenges faced by the Atebubu-Wiase landscapes during the dry season. It is on project beneficiaries to protect and prevent fire from burning project farmlands during the upcoming dry season. Fire is a necessary evil hence, it should be managed appropriately and prevented from getting out of control. Ending his statement, He mentioned to participants present that today's meeting would look out to address some fire challenges and a recap on fire management and prevention will be conducted by the fire service officers to refresh our minds on what to do best as far as fire is concerned.

Statement from the District Coordinating Director-Atebubu Amantin Municipal

Mr Joseph K.B Tang, the district coordinating director for Atebubu-Amantin Municipal made a statement prior to the start of the meeting. He mentioned that the project's initiative is a very good intervention that has come to improve the livelihoods of farmers and mitigate climate change. Beneficiaries are privileged to be a part of this project because planting materials and other sorts of supports are given at no cost which is rare in our modern world. Cashew and Mango production has become highly marketable if well managed, they generate a lot of revenue for the farmer. Ending his statement, he appreciated the efforts of the project implementors and donors for including his district in this crucial intervention that will help alleviate poverty. He also urged all stakeholders to pay critical attention to the project protocols to ensure that the main objective of the project is achieved.

Setting the Context by Mr. Kingsley Twumasi, Senior Projects Officer, NDF

The 11th Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) meeting commenced with a warm welcome and introduction by Mr Kingsley Twumasi, Senior Projects Officer for the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF). Mr Twumasi expressed gratitude to the assembled stakeholders, acknowledging the vital roles played by project donors, implementers, and partners in ensuring the initiative's success.

Project Overview

Mr. Twumasi provided a summarised overview of the project's components as below:

1. Indigenous Tree Planting: Led by the African Plantations for Sustainable Development (APSD), this component focuses on restoring natural forests within existing concessions.
2. Agroforestry: Implemented by the NGPTA (NPTA), this component promotes sustainable agricultural practices and tree integration.

3. Community Engagement: Facilitated by NDF, this component encompasses quarterly MSP meetings, fire prevention and management training, and agroforestry training for farmers.

Project Benefits and Objectives

Mr. Twumasi highlighted the project's key objectives:

- Enhance carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change impacts
- Support local beneficiaries in central Ghana's Bono East Region
- Foster resilient food systems and increased income for farmers and communities
- Promote sustainable land management practices

Ending his statement, he mentioned that in achieving these objectives, the project will help to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with climate change, restore natural ecosystems, and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

Presentation by Mr Mustapha Seidu, Director for Nature and Development Foundation (NDF)

To find solutions to emerging challenges to the project implementation. Mr Seidu delivered a presentation on agreed points to address issues identified going forward to see to the success of the project's implementation. He mentioned categorically that fire was a critical issue raised in the previous meeting as an ongoing threat to project sustainability. Seidu mentioned some of the identified causes of fire incidents during previous meetings below:

1. Slash and burn for agriculture purposes.
2. Hunting, especially group hunting.
3. Herdsmen (Fulani and indigenes) burn bushes for the growth of fresh grass to feed their cattle.

Out of the three causes of bushfires identified, bushfires caused by Fulani herdsmen is the major issue to tackle as it has become rampant and devastating to farmlands in the Atebubu-Wiase Landscapes.

Mr Seidu further mentioned that some measures were adopted to combat fire incidents in the project landscapes. In the 3rd MSP meeting, which was held on the 3rd of September 2022, the following were measures to manage and prevent fire from destroying project farmlands:

- 1) In collaboration with the District Assembly, the District Ghana National Fire Service and APSD, form community fire volunteers and equip and motivate them in each of the participating communities. Their role is to support farmers in preventing and controlling bushfires. This means that a farmer who is desirous of burning around his farm will have to inform the fire volunteer and his neighbouring

farmers for them to participate in such preventive burning exercise. Forming farmer groups for farmers who are in clusters will facilitate this process.

- 2) Organise regular fire prevention and control education in collaboration with the District Ghana National Fire Service and other stakeholders. This will lead to a gradual behavioural change toward 'no burning'. The Ghana Police Service also has a role to play since the Prevention and Control of Bushfire Act 1990 PNDCL 229 provide punitive measures for offenders. The group also suggested that the project should support assemblymen to make regular announcements in the Community Information Centre on the impending bushfire season.
- 3) The commitment and involvement of the chiefs and opinion leaders of the communities is essential to ensure that people who do not comply with the rules established under item 1) above are sanctioned by the community and if necessary, reported to the police for prosecution.
- 4) The groups are of the suggestion that each farmer must construct at least 10m fire belt around his or her farm. In addition, the farmer may subdivide the farm into blocks with clear boundaries to limit the amount of damage in case the burning flames cross the fire belt into the farm. It will also be helpful if the farmer reduces the volume of combustible materials in his farm.
- 5) Institute a system of awarding or giving recognition to farmer groups or communities who do not experience bushfires.

Some of these measures have been implemented such as the regulation of fire prevention awareness for each community, regular and frequent community radio announcements of bush fire prevention and control and the preparation of fire belts. However, some of the measures have not yet been implemented such as the activation of the community fire volunteers. In recognition of the existential threat of fire to the plantations in the landscape, additional measures are proposed to be implemented. These include:

- Activating or forming fire volunteer teams in project communities. This activity will be facilitated by the NGPTA team.
- Acquiring equipment/Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or implements for fire control activities. This action will be led by the NDF.
- Conduct regular training sessions and drills to keep members of the volunteers prepared and informed. This activity will be jointly executed by the NDF, NGPTA and GNFS
- Create educational materials and conduct outreach in schools and community centers. This activity is to be led by the NDF.
- Train the judiciary and the law enforcement officers on the law and policies relating to bush burning. This activity is to be led by the NDF.

The implementation of these activities is however subject to the availability of funds and agreement with the lead project managers.

Mr Seidu ended his presentation by saying that there will be a breakout session where participants will be in groups to discuss the remedies to tackle the Fulani/indigenes herdsmen issue going forward. He urged all participants to actively participate in the group discussions. ***Attached as annexe_2 is the PowerPoint presentation.***

Presentation on Fire Prevention and Management

Mr. Zakaria Kabore from the Ghana National Fire Service – Atebubu Municipal Assembly, made a brief presentation on how to prevent and manage fire incidents. He started with the types of fire which are domestic, industrial, and bushfire. In his presentation, he said that bushfires can be used as land management tools in many rural settings, even though they cause havoc to life, properties, land, and the environment if not controlled. The fire officer was excited to inform the participants that, through the intervention of NDFs timely fire prevention and management training at the project communities, bushfire cases have been reduced in the Atebubu-Wiase. From the beginning of the project to now, the Project through NDF and in collaboration with the Ghana National Fire Service trains all participating communities on fire prevention and management prior to the dry season. The NDF has already hinted to the GNFS stationed at Atebubu-Wiase about this year's fire prevention and management training. This regular training has contributed massively to the reduction of fire incidents in the Atebubu-Wiase Landscape. The officer 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 animals, and possessing any fire ignition tool in and around the farm during the dry season (November to April) are prohibited. Offenders of the bushfire law will be fined, jailed, or sentenced to communal labour. The fire officer educated the participants on the causes of bushfires 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 April) to protect and keep the farmlands from fire outbreaks which can cause massive destruction to properties. Farmers were asked to be each other's keepers at the time of the dry season to keep and protect farms free from fire outbreaks.

Breakout Session Results

Mr Seidu led this case activity where participants were grouped into three groups by assigning numbers 1,2 and 3 randomly to avoid biased groupings. Groups were briefed on the case study, which is to suggest solutions to the issues of bush burning by Herdsmen (Fulani and indigenes). This was identified by the MSP as a major cause of fire

and farm destruction. Groups were asked to examine the problem and come out with practical solutions. Each of the three groups selected representatives to present their findings. Bulleted below are the solutions identified by the groups:

Group One

- **Collaborative Herd Management:** Indigenous cattle owners should engage with traditional authorities to establish mutually beneficial herd management agreements.
- **Designated Cattle Ranches:** Allocate specific lands for cattle ranching to prevent encroachment on farmlands.
- **Accountability and Deterrence:** Impose penalties on both cattle owners and herdsman responsible for the destruction of farmlands.
- **Fodder Banks Initiative:** District assemblies should establish fodder banks to provide alternative animal feed.
- **Compensation Bylaw:** Enact bylaws to ensure prompt compensation for victims of Fulani/indigene herdsman-related activities.

Group Two

- **Petition for Herdsmen Removal:** Communities should formally request that chiefs and District Chief Executives (DCEs) remove Fulani herdsman from community lands, citing concerns over land degradation and security.
- **Cattle Registration:** Register all cattle belonging to Fulani herdsman and indigenous farmers to ensure accountability and traceability.
- **Community-Based Supervision:** Establish community-led committees to oversee cattle grazing and prevent encroachment on farmlands.
- **Animal Husbandry Bylaw:** Enact district-level bylaws regulating animal husbandry practices, addressing issues like stray cattle and crop damage.
- **Cattle Mediation:** Appoint mediators to resolve disputes between farmers and herdsman, promoting peaceful coexistence.
- Herdsman must obtain a fire permit before conducting any burning activities, allowing for assessment and authorization to ensure controlled and safe burning practices.

Group Three

- **Establishment of Regulatory Committee:** Chiefs should establish a committee to oversee the management of Fulani/Indigenous herdsman activities, develop by-laws, and establish compensation procedures for farm destruction.
- **Community Approval for Herdsman:** Herdsman from outside the community should not be accepted to operate in the area.

These suggestion solutions and others will be presented to the advisory board for further deliberation. Indeed, the herdsman challenge is complex because of power dynamics between cattle owners and crop farmers as well as the involvement of local herdsman. The involvement of the chiefs in both fire and herdsman management cannot be underestimated.

Switch from Cashew to Mango Plantation

It was recently reported by the field team of the inoaland that a significant number of participating farmers are now more interested in mango than cashew. This was the opposite a few years ago. A question was then put to the participant at the MSP why the shift in preference to mango over cashew. Below are the reasons stated by the farmers at the 11th MSP:

- The cashew doesn't have a ready market whilst the mango is in high demand on the market for purchase.
- The cashew plant hardly yields well in the Atebubu landscape so that has discouraged farmers from planting cashews. From the reasons given above, it was then recommended that the project should research to know the reason why the cashew is no more fruiting in the Atebubu landscape. Again, if possible, the project should find a market for the cashew purchase to boost the interest of cashew farmers.

Suggestions and Comments

Stakeholders at the MSP meeting provided valuable insights to enhance project implementation. Notable suggestions include:

1. Traditional leaders should cease shielding individuals responsible for bush burning during the dry season, ensuring accountability and adherence to regulations.
2. Beneficiary communities should establish firefighting teams to combat fires during the dry season.
3. The project should support the Atebubu-Wiase Fire Service by providing motorbikes for patrols during the dry season in project areas.
4. Chiefs should be involved in community announcements to raise awareness on fire prevention and management within their territories.

Conclusion

The Multi-Stakeholder Platform Meeting facilitated an open exchange of experiences, perspectives, and challenges among stakeholders, focusing on project implementation. Key discussions centred on Fulani herdsman issues, with group deliberations yielding practical solutions. Participants recognized the project's significant impact in improving livelihoods for farmers and households within the project landscapes.

Issues Log and Action Points

Issue	Status	Actions until the next MSP meeting
Communication	On-going	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 select their representatives to the MSP
Land Tenure	In progress	NDF, Assembly members, and NGPTA team mediated the impasse between the chiefs and the migrant farmers. However, new communities are being added and the issue reappears
Low participation of migrant Farmers	On-going	Same as above

Annexes

Annexe_1 Participant Sheet



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Annexe_2 NDF's PowerPoint Presentation



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