ATEBUBU WIASE FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT

15TH MULTISTAKEHOLDER PLATFORM MEETING REPORT

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SENE WEST DISTRICT

Atebubu & Wiase
Forest Landscape Restoration Project

Nature & Development Foundation

This report was prepared

by the

Nature and Development Foundation

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Nature & Development Foundation	**Head Office**
P M B L45	Centre for African Wetlands Building, University of Ghana
Legon, Accra	Tel : + 233 30 2903359
Ghana	info@ndfwestafrica.org
	www.ndfwestafrica.org

Table of Contents

Overview 4

1.0 Background 4

2.0 Meeting Details and Attendance 5

3.0 Welcome Address 5

4.0 Remarks by the MSP Chairperson 6

5.0 Purpose of Gathering 7

6.0 Setting of Context 8

7.0 Presentations 9

7.1 Presentation By NGPTA 9

7.2 Presentation by the Ghana National Fire Service 11

8.0 Statements by Stakeholders 13

8.1 Statement by the Ghana Police Service 13

8.2 Statement by the Department of Agriculture 14

8.3 Statement by the Ghana Immigration Service 15

8.4 Statement by the Fulani Representative 17

9.0 Questions And Responses 17

10.0 Conclusion 20

ANNEX 21

Overview

This report provides a summary of the proceedings and key outcomes of the 15th Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) Meeting of the Atebubu-Wiase Forest Landscape Restoration Project, held on 22nd October 2025 at the Sene West District Assembly Hall. The meeting aimed to update stakeholders on project progress and upcoming activities, identify emerging challenges, and enhance collaboration among stakeholders within the landscape.

1.0 Background

The Atebubu-Wiase Forest Landscape Restoration (AWFLR) Project is an initiative aimed at restoring degraded forest ecosystems and promoting sustainable land use in the Atebubu-Wiase areas of Ghana's Bono East Region. It is implemented by a consortium of partners, including the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), African Plantation for Sustainable Development (APSD), and iNovaland, with financial support from AstraZeneca. The Project aims to restore degraded forests and promote sustainable land use through natural regeneration, agroforestry, and climate-smart farming. The project targets the restoration of over 10,000 hectares of land and the establishment of extensive farmer-managed agroforestry systems to enhance ecosystem health and community resilience.

A central component of the Project is its participatory governance system, anchored in the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP). The MSP serves as a forum for coordination and dialogue among key actors. Through regular meetings, stakeholders review project progress, address issues and plan joint actions. The platform promotes transparency, accountability, and collaboration, ensuring that local voices are included in decision-making.

In previous years, MSP meetings were held quarterly across the two project districts. However, in 2025, the number of meetings was reduced to three per year, with each district hosting its own MSP session. A total of 14 MSP meetings had already been held since the project's inception. The 15th MSP meeting for the Sene West District was organised on 22nd October 2025 with the following objectives:

The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Review the progress and achievements made under the Project since the last MSP meeting.
2. Identify and address emerging challenges that can hinder project progress.
3. Discuss strategies to improve fire management and the protection of farmlands.
4. Strengthen collaboration among project partners.

2.0 Meeting Details and Attendance

The 15th Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) Meeting for Sene West District was held at the District's Assembly Hall on 22nd October 2025. Prior to the meeting, formal invitations were sent to various stakeholders, including representatives from the Forestry Commission, the Ghana National Fire Service, the Ghana Police Service, the Department of Agriculture, the Ghana Immigration Service, the District assembly, traditional authorities, Fulani leaders, and farmers under the project. To ensure gender inclusiveness and balanced participation, each lead farmer was encouraged to attend with one female farmer from their community. This approach aimed to promote women's involvement in decision-making, acknowledging their vital role in the project.

A total of 84 participants attended the meeting comprising 67 males and 17 females, representing 80% male and 20% female participation respectively. The gender composition reflected steady progress toward improved inclusion, as more women are increasingly taking part in the meeting. The meeting recorded a strong turnout, reflecting high stakeholder interest and ownership of the Project.

3.0 Welcome Address

The welcome address was delivered by Mr Nuhu Jibrila, representing the Sene West District Coordinating Director, who opened the meeting by calling participants to order and

encouraging everyone to give their full attention to the proceedings. He emphasised the importance of active farmer participation in the Project, noting that the success of the initiative depends on the dedication and cooperation of the beneficiary communities. He reminded farmers that while the project provides valuable support, it is equally important for them to take ownership and contribute to its progress through consistent commitment and responsible land management practices.

He concluded by encouraging all stakeholders to work together in unity and self-reliance, stressing that "while the project is helping us, we must also help ourselves" to ensure the lasting success and sustainability of the forest and livelihood restoration efforts within the Atebubu-Wiase landscape.

4.0 Remarks by the MSP Chairperson

The Chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP), Hon. Anthony Owusu, welcomed all participants to the meeting. He expressed gratitude for their attendance and continued support for the Project.

In his remarks, Hon. Owusu encouraged community members, especially farmers, to take an active role in the project's implementation, stressing that their participation is key to ensuring they benefit fully from its outcomes. He explained that the project presents a great opportunity not only to restore degraded lands but also to generate future benefits such as carbon credits.

He cautioned that if farmers fail to get involved now, they may not benefit when such opportunities arise. Hon. Owusu described the project as a valuable and forward-looking initiative that will bring lasting benefits to both current and future generations.

He concluded by urging all stakeholders to remain committed, cooperative, and proactive, noting that the success of the project depends on the collective efforts of everyone within the landscape.

5.0 Purpose of Gathering

The purpose of the meeting was presented by Mr. Kingsley Twumasi, the Senior Project Officer of the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF). He explained that the meeting was organised as part of the Atebubu-Wiase Forest Landscape Restoration Project, which is implemented by NDF and other partners with funding support from AstraZeneca.

Mr. Twumasi stated that the project has two main objectives — to improve the livelihoods of farmers and to mitigate the effects of climate change. He recalled that before the project began, consultations were held with local farmers to identify their preferred species. Most farmers indicated a strong interest in cashew and mango, which were then selected as the key agroforestry species for the project. He explained that by integrating these trees with their annual crops, farmers are able to earn income from both short-term food crops and long-term tree produce, ensuring year-round economic benefits.

He further noted that beyond improving livelihoods, the project also contributes to climate change mitigation by promoting tree planting and forest restoration. The planted trees help absorb carbon dioxide and improve environmental conditions, which is particularly important as communities increasingly experience the negative effects of climate change, including erratic rainfall, drought, and declining soil fertility.

He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update stakeholders on progress made, share plans for upcoming activities, and receive feedback and suggestions from participants on how to make the project more beneficial and sustainable for communities.

Before concluding, Mr. Twumasi acknowledged and thanked all stakeholders present for their active participation and continued support for the Project.

Figure 1. *Mr. Kingsley Twumasi delivering the opening remarks and explaining the purpose of the meeting.*

6.0 Setting of Context

The Director of the Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), Mr. Mustapha Seidu, was invited to give the opening speech and set the context for the Meeting.

In his address, he welcomed participants and explained that those who had attended previous meetings would notice a change in the meeting schedule previously held quarterly but now organised every four months. Mr. Seidu highlighted the importance of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform, noting that a project without stakeholder engagement has no foundation. He explained that the MSP serves as an open forum where all stakeholders can freely discuss issues affecting project implementation and jointly identify solutions. He encouraged participants to use the platform to express their concerns honestly so that challenges can be addressed collaboratively.

He pointed out that among the recurring challenges facing farmers in the landscape, bushfires and cattle destruction of crops remain the two most critical. He noted that these issues

continue to threaten farm productivity and the survival of planted trees, hence the project's continuous focus on addressing them in every meeting.

Mr. Seidu acknowledged the commendable efforts of the Dwan Traditional Council, which has developed and documented community by-laws on cattle herding and bush burning in collaboration with the District Assembly. He described this as a positive step towards ensuring responsible land use and protecting both farms and restoration sites.

He further noted that this meeting marked the third and final MSP meeting for the year, and would focus on reviewing activities undertaken so far, including the number of seedlings distributed and planted, survival and mortality rates, number of participating farmers, and the total land area restored. The discussions, he said, would also capture feedback from participants to guide planning for the next phase of the project.

In closing, Mr. Seidu reiterated the project's commitment to transparency, community participation, and shared responsibility, and encouraged all stakeholders to continue working together to overcome challenges and sustain the gains made under the Project.

7.0 Presentations

7.1 Presentation By NGPTA

The report was delivered by Mr. Abraham Yalley, on behalf of the NGPTA project team. In his presentation, Mr. Yalley reported that under the Agroforestry Programme, planting activities were ongoing, with 111,697 trees planted across 832.2 hectares. He mentioned that 319 existing farmers in the agroforestry programme received 41,841 trees as replacements during the third quarter. He further noted that the team continued to engage communities and lead farmers, while the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's Community Extension Agents provided training to strengthen farmers' knowledge in agroforestry practices. To improve seedling access, 15 satellite community nurseries had been established as collection points.

Mr. Yalley explained that monitoring covered agroforestry plots established in 2022, 2023, and 2024, as well as areas under natural regeneration. He added that a value chain analysis was being conducted, which involved a baseline survey of potential cooperative farmers and a market analysis for cashew and mango, to guide future livelihood interventions.

On natural forest restoration, he stated that the planting season had ended successfully with a total of 3,202,772 trees planted, representing 2,562 hectares restored. He also indicated that biodiversity monitoring for 2025 was ongoing to assess ecological recovery across project sites.

Providing updates on agroforestry training, Mr. Yalley reported that 24 communities had been trained, involving 972 participants—620 males and 352 females, with women making up 36% of total participants. Training modules covered cashew and mango planting protocols, including site selection, land preparation, lining and pegging, hoeing and planting, post-planting care such as mulching and watering, and integrated pest management and safe use of agrochemicals.

He further briefed participants on the progress of the Youth Team Model, explaining that the team consisted of 50 members—13 females and 37 males aged between 25 and 57 years—drawn from 21 pilot communities. The team's main role, he said, was to support farmers in planting operations, particularly targeting vulnerable groups such as the aged, persons with disabilities, women, and large-scale farmers. By the end of the third quarter, the youth team had supported 129 farmers and planted 22,765 trees on 145 hectares of land. Mr. Yalley added that this initiative had provided a source of income for community members and promoted inclusiveness in tree planting.

Presenting findings from the socio-economic study, he noted that a survey had been conducted across 296 households in 10 communities to understand the livelihood status of farmers and the early outcomes of the project. The results revealed strong community interest and appreciation for the project's benefits. Respondents also acknowledged the role of local ecological knowledge and traditional conservation practices in protecting plant and animal species. However, the study highlighted several challenges, including erratic rainfall, prolonged drought, wildfires farm destruction by cattle, lack of market information for mango and cashew, and unrealistic financial expectations among some farmers.

Mr. Yalley emphasised that the project was producing positive social and economic outcomes. He added that some farmers were already beginning to enjoy financial returns from their cashew and mango farms, showing the project's potential to improve livelihoods.

In closing, Mr. Yalley outlined the planned activities for the fourth quarter of 2025, which included post-planting monitoring, seed procurement for the 2026 planting season, responses to audit findings, and continued stakeholder engagements through MSP, Advisory Board, and Project Board meetings.

Figure 2. *Mr. Abraham Yalley delivering a presentation on the progress made in implementing project activities.*

7.2 Presentation by the Ghana National Fire Service

Mr. David Owusu, an officer with the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) in Kwame Danso, delivered a presentation focused on fire management and prevention, with particular emphasis on community responsibility in safeguarding farmlands and restored areas from bushfires.

Mr. Owusu reminded participants that fire remains one of the greatest threats to the success of forest restoration and farming activities within the Atebubu-Wiase landscape. He explained that many farmers lose their crops and investments each year due to careless fire use and poor fire management practices. To address this, he guided participants through the dos and don’ts of fire prevention, urging everyone to take precautionary measures seriously, especially during the dry season, when the risk of fire outbreaks is high.

He emphasised the ban on open burning during the dry season. He cautioned farmers against using fire for land clearing, hunting, or charcoal production, as such practices often lead to uncontrollable bushfires. He also warned against the careless disposal of cigarette butts and matches, and urged farmers to properly extinguish fires used for cooking in the farms to prevent accidental ignition.

Addressing the creation of fire belts, Mr. Owusu noted that some farmers leave only a narrow strip of land as a barrier, which is insufficient to stop spreading flames. He explained that a fire belt should be at least 20 metres wide, as this width provides enough space to stop or slow down a fire, allowing time for control measures to be taken. He also advised farmers to clear dry vegetation and combustible materials properly and to avoid leaving empty pesticide containers on farms, as they can easily ignite and worsen fire outbreaks.

He discouraged the use of fire for hunting or land preparation, recommending safer, non-burning methods of land management. He also called on community members to join or support local fire volunteer groups, who play a crucial role in detecting, preventing, and controlling fires.

He reminded participants that the trees planted represent a major investment, and protecting them from fire is essential to sustaining their long-term benefits.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Owusu noted that although fire can be a useful agricultural tool when used properly, it becomes a dangerous threat when mismanaged. He appealed to all stakeholders chiefs, farmers, youth, and opinion leaders to work together to maintain a fire-free landscape during the dry season.

He concluded by reminding participants that a single act of negligence can destroy years of hard work and investment and urged everyone to take personal responsibility in preventing fires and protecting their farmlands.

Figure 1. Mr. David Owusu presenting on fire prevention and management

8.1 Statement by the Ghana Police Service

Chief Inspector. Saviour Obimpeh, representing the Ghana Police Service, delivered a brief statement. In his remarks, he emphasised the strong collaboration between the Ghana Police Service and the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) in maintaining law and order, especially during the dry season when fire-related incidents tend to increase.

Mr. Obimpeh stated that the Police Service works hand in hand with the GNFS to enforce laws on bushfire prevention and to ensure that individuals who deliberately set fires or violate fire bans are held accountable. He added that the Police will enforce the law when people break the rules. He warned that anyone who sets fires during the ban will be made to face legal action. He urged participants to follow the dos and don’ts of fire management, especially during the fire ban, so the Police will not have cause to take action.

Mr. Obimpeh concluded by urging community members to report any suspicious fire-related activities or offenders to the nearest police station for prompt action. He reiterated the Police Service's commitment to maintaining security within the project communities.

Figure 2. Chief Inspector. Saviour Obimpeh making a statement on behalf of the Ghana Police Service, Kwame Danso

8.2 Statement by the Department of Agriculture

Mr. Adomako Lawrence, representing the Department of Agriculture (MoFA), in his remarks, focused on the importance of crops to livelihoods and trees contribution to climate change mitigation, while also addressing the challenges of poor farm maintenance, misuse of agrochemicals, cattle destruction, and bushfires within the Atebubu-Wiase landscape.

Mr. Adomako explained that crops remain the main source of livelihood for most households in the area, providing food, income, and employment. He emphasised that integrating crops

with trees through agroforestry systems is essential for improving soil fertility, restoring degraded lands, and ensuring long-term productivity. He encouraged farmers to value trees as complementary to their crops, as they help conserve moisture, improve soil health, and provide shade and additional income sources such as fruits and timber.

However, he observed that many farmers plant trees without proper maintenance, which leads to poor survival rates. He explained that after planting, most farmers do not weed, mulch, or water their trees regularly, leaving them vulnerable to weeds, drought, and fire damage. He also noted that some farmers apply agrochemicals without prior technical advice, which can harm both crops and young trees, pollute the soil, and reduce yields. He urged farmers to always consult agricultural extension officers before spraying chemicals and to adopt safe and sustainable farming practices.

Mr. Adomako further expressed concern about cattle destroying farms and young trees, which discourages farmers from maintaining their plots. He appealed to community leaders and relevant authorities to work together to control free grazing and establish clear by-laws to protect farms and restoration sites.

He also linked the issue of bushfires to poor farm management and careless practices such as burning for land preparation or hunting. He explained that bushfires not only destroy crops and trees but also reverse years of restoration efforts. He urged farmers to create and maintain fire belts around their farms and to cooperate with the Ghana National Fire Service to prevent and control fires during the dry season.

8.3 Statement by the Ghana Immigration Service

Madam Portia Pokuaa, representing the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), gave a short speech where she explained that the Ghana Immigration Service is responsible for monitoring and managing the entry of non-citizens into the area. She stated that some individuals enter the

communities without proper documentation and engage in illegal activities, including bush hunting and cattle rearing.

She warned that some of these illegal entrants have been found to be responsible for starting fires, either deliberately or through careless practices. Madam Pokuaa therefore urged community members to remain vigilant and report any suspicious individuals or newcomers who enter the area without proper papers to the Ghana Immigration Service.

In her conclusion, she assured participants that the Ghana Immigration Service will continue to work closely with the Police, the Ghana National Fire Service, and other stakeholders to strengthen community security, prevent illegal activities, and safeguard the landscape from threats such as bushfires and land encroachment.

Figure 3. Madam Portia Pokuaa making a statement on behalf of Ghana Immigration Service

8.4 Statement by the Fulani Representative

The Fulani representative first spoke about the challenge of new Fulani settlers entering communities without proper coordination. He explained that these newcomers are often brought in by agents who help them find places to settle, and once established, they tend to invite their relatives to join them. This, he said, has led to an increase in population and occasional tension with local residents.

The second issue he raised was the widespread misconception that Fulanis are responsible for starting bushfires. He strongly disagreed with this perception, explaining that most Fulani people do not engage in charcoal burning or hunting with fire, which are among the main causes of bushfires in the area. He urged participants to avoid generalising or blaming all Fulanis for the actions of a few individuals.

He appealed to the community to focus instead on collaboration and vigilance. He emphasised the need for everyone to work together to identify and monitor new arrivals, ensuring that they have the necessary documentation and are settling responsibly.

In conclusion, the Fulani representative called for unity, fairness, and cooperation among all groups to prevent bushfires, protect farms and properties, and maintain peaceful coexistence within the Atebubu-Wiase landscape.

9.0 Questions And Responses

During the interactive session, participants raised several questions and concerns related to fire management, cattle destruction, Fulani settlement, security, and community collaboration within the Atebubu-Wiase landscape. Representatives from the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS), Ghana Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, Department of Agriculture (MoFA), and Fulani leadership responded accordingly. Below is a summary of the key issues discussed:

Table 1: Questions and Responses

Questions Raised	Responses Provided
What procedure should we follow when someone destroys our farm?	The Police explained that the affected farmer should report the incident to the Police, who will issue a letter to the Department of Agriculture for field assessment. The Agriculture Officer will then determine the extent of damage and value of losses. The offender will be required to pay compensation or face prosecution.
How do we stop Fulani herders from entering our communities?	The Immigration Service noted that movement cannot be completely stopped, but local by-laws can help regulate entry and activities. They encouraged traditional councils and assemblies to work together to ensure new arrivals are properly registered.
What are the penalties for those who break the fire ban?	The Police representative stated that anyone caught burning during the fire ban would be arrested and prosecuted in accordance with national fire and environmental protection laws. He urged everyone to adhere to the dos and don’ts of fire management to avoid legal action.
Sometimes when Fulani herders destroy crops and we report to the Police, they don’t act. Why?	The Police representative assured participants that all legitimate reports are investigated, and urged farmers to report promptly.
What are the Fulani leaders doing to reduce bushfires?	The Fulani representatives said they would meet with their members to caution them against careless fire use.
Shouldn’t the Immigration Officer already know who enters the community without papers? Why should we report to them?	The Immigration Service explained that due to limited logistics and inadequate vehicles, officers cannot patrol all areas effectively. They therefore rely on community members to report suspicious movements or illegal entrants to help them respond promptly.

In some communities, Fulani groups come in with the knowledge of chiefs. How can we report them when they cause bushfires?	Stakeholders were advised to report all incidents of destruction or fire regardless of prior agreements.
What can Fulani leaders do to help identify newcomers?	The Fulani leadership stated that they will collaborate with chiefs, assembly members, and immigration officers to monitor new arrivals and verify their documentation before settlement.
The GNFS should come to our communities to conduct fire training for us.	The GNFS representative responded that they have been collaborating with the project for the past three years to train community members. He confirmed that fire training and awareness exercises are ongoing and will continue to reach more communities.
When there is a fire outbreak, who should we contact first — the Police or the Fire Service?	The Ghana National Fire Service advised that all fire outbreaks should be reported immediately to the GNFS, as they are trained and equipped to respond quickly. The Police may then assist with investigations if required.
How wide should a fire belt be?	The Fire Service explained that a fire belt should be at least 20 metres wide to effectively prevent fire from spreading. Farmers were advised to clear dry vegetation and combustible materials thoroughly during land preparation.
What should we do with the leaf litter after weeding during the ban on fire?	Farmers were advised to weed their farms before the dry season.

How do you assess and investigate crop damage by cattle?	The Department of Agriculture stated that officers conduct on-site investigations, estimate the acreage destroyed, and calculate potential yield loss in order to determine appropriate fines or compensation for the affected farmer.
Immigration officers should collaborate with chiefs and assembly members to regulate Fulani activities.	The Immigration Service agreed and assured participants that they will continue to work closely with local authorities to enforce by-laws and ensure that the activities of herders are properly monitored.
How can we better protect our farms from both cattle and fire?	Officials advised farmers to build strong fire belts, and work closely with community leaders and security services to respond quickly to any incidents.

10.0 Conclusion

The meeting was successfully held with strong participation and active engagement from stakeholders in the Sene West district. The meeting recorded an impressive attendance reflecting significant progress in promoting gender inclusivity and community representation in the project's governance processes.

The meeting proved highly successful in achieving its objectives. It created an open and participatory environment where stakeholders engaged in meaningful dialogue on key issues affecting the landscape. Discussions centred on bushfire prevention, cattle management, etc with all parties reaffirming their commitment to protecting farmlands and restored areas from fires.The active participation of farmers and local leaders demonstrated strong community ownership and enthusiasm toward sustaining restoration efforts.

Overall, the meeting was a success, marked by high turnout, constructive dialogue, and renewed commitment among stakeholders to safeguard the Atebubu-Wiase landscape.

ANNEX

Annex 1_ Scanned Attendance Sheet

ATTENDANCE - SENE WEST MSP.pdf