



## Ghana



# A seat for everyone at the table for sustainable natural resource management in Ghana

A look at building inclusive decision making structures for natural resources in two Ghanaian landscapes.

Deforestation and forest degradation are major environmental concerns in Ghana. Ghana lost about 60% of its forest cover between 1950 and the turn of the last century (2.7 million hectares), and considering the current deforestation rate of approximately 2% per annum (135,000 ha / year), the situation is expected to get worse. The high rate of deforestation and forest degradation in Ghana is primarily driven by slash and burn agriculture, timber harvesting, wildfires, mining, and fuelwood extraction.

## The Stablizing Land Use (PLUS) project

Recognising these threats and the consequent impact of deforestation on Ghana's predominantly agrarian economy, a number of initiatives are being pursued to address the drivers of deforestation. The government of Ghana has made forest protection a key priority to enable the country to meet its objectives under various global initiatives. As a complementary measure to support these national initiatives, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is implementing the Stabilizing Land Use Project (PLUS) which is a landscape mechanism for enhancing biodiversity in agricultural land, ecological connectivity and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). The 3-year (2017-2020) project is also being implemented in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Uganda.



In Ghana, IUCN partnered with the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Forestry Commission to deliver the project. Supporting project partners, Codesult Network and A Rocha Ghana, are implementing the project in IUCN's two project landscapes: Wassa Amenfi landscape within the Western Region of Ghana / High Forest Zone and the Mole ecological landscape which falls within three regions in the Northern Savannah Zone. The project has also benefitted from the useful guidance and contributions of a 12-member national steering committee made up of representatives of key stakeholder institutions in the natural resources sector.\*

## Landscapes in brief

### Wassa Amenfi landscape

Covers two administrative jurisdictions/districts: Wassa Amenfi West Municipal and Amenfi Central District Assemblies (some activities also involved the Wassa Amenfi East Municipal Assembly)

Estimated area of focal landscape is 121,769 ha

One Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) within landscape and supported by IUCN: Achichire-Sureso-Pebaseman CREMA; land area of 9,107 ha; 11 key communities and 17 Satellite communities (total of 28 communities); 1,606 households; CREMA population of 10,311 people (50.1% female and 49.9% male)

Mixed use: cocoa and other tree/cash crops; food crops; tree plantations; 7 forest reserves; 2 globally significant biodiversity areas (GSBAs)

### Mole ecological landscape

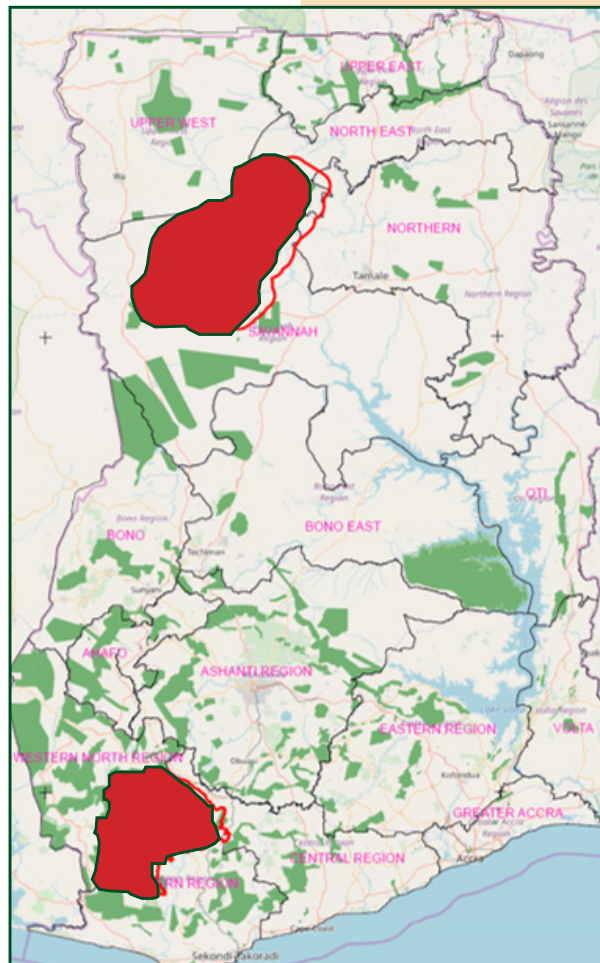
Covers five administrative districts (West Gonja, North Gonja, Sawla-Tuna-Kalba, Wa East and Mamprugu Moagduri)

Estimated area of focal landscape is 1,213,826 ha

Five Protected Area Management Advisory Units (PAMAUs) being supported (one per district)

Six CREMAs within landscape; 4 receiving support from IUCN under PLUS (Murugu-Mognori CREMA, Yazori-Kumbo CREMA, Bawena-Kpulumbo CREMA and Grubagu-Wawato CREMA); land area 3,663.13 km<sup>2</sup>

Mixed use: shea, other fruit trees and food crops; one protected area i.e. Mole National Park; tourism



Focal landscapes of the PLUS project in Ghana in red. Mole ecological landscape is in the North and the Wassa Amenfi landscape is in the South.



## Making gender count in natural resource management

In order to optimise benefits and support for sustainable management of natural resources, it is important to harness the role of both men and women. The PLUS project has therefore contributed towards enhancing gender mainstreaming and responsiveness of policies and strategies, and aided the general participation of women in decision making.

There is historically low participation of women in natural resource governance decision making in the two project landscapes. This is mainly due to poor representation in the decision making process coupled with the traditional belief in some circles that women have no place when it comes to governance and decision making. Confounding reasons for low female participation in natural resource management include comparatively low levels of education and lack of exposure which serve as barriers to their active engagement in leadership and decision making. Also, the traditional norm that women do not clear new land is a major impediment to women's access to productive land.

In order to address these challenges, IUCN worked with the two implementing partners (A Rocha Ghana and Codesult Network) to establish Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs), which are mechanisms through which community members are given the authority and responsibility of protecting and managing their resources while reaping the benefits. The CREMAs then served as a springboard for the establishment of governance working groups (GWGs). These are groups of key stakeholders set up to provide the needed structure for spearheading dialogue, capacity building and decision making on issues around sustainable landscape management. The PLUS project provided technical support to CREMAs and GWGs in the two landscapes to reinforce the importance of gender mainstreaming in natural resources management.

Different approaches and strategies including sensitisation, awareness creation, education, consultation, and trainings were used to help bridge existing gender gaps and help establish elevated roles for women and vulnerable groups in sustainable natural resource management and utilisation.

*“The PLUS project made deliberate effort to include gender in natural resource governance, something which is uncommon in CREMAs.”*

**Ms. Joyce Ocansey**

Energy Commission  
Co-Chair, PLUS national steering committee, and member, National REDD+ Gender Sub-Working Group

Saadia Bobtoya Owusu-Amofah, IUCN PLUS project manager in Ghana, brings attention to the vital importance of including women in natural resources management during an interview at the Global Landscapes Forum conference in Accra in 2019.



## Women's participation encoded in procedure

In the Wassa Amenfi landscape, women's participation was facilitated and strengthened through affirmative action, which saw five slots reserved for women on the GWG. Women's groups were also sensitised and provided an opportunity to nominate their own representatives to serve on the GWG. In the Mole ecological landscape, affirmative action was integrated into the constitution of existing Protected Area Management Advisory Units (PAMAUs) to increase participation of women. This provision allows for the co-opting of members into the PAMAUs with attention given to women's organisations and groups.

Representation of women in the CREMAs and PAMAUs has steadily increased but there is still a lot of room for improvement. While the CREMAs, PAMAUs, Mole National Park, civil society organisations and other interveners have created an enabling environment for women's participation, there are still deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers that work to inhibit their participation. For example, traditionally, women do not own land in most parts of northern Ghana due to the patriarchal system that exists. Inheritance is usually through patrilineal lines. Additionally, the raising of some crops, which provide a good source of livelihoods, are traditionally seen as the domain of men. Despite these barriers, the role of women as front line users and managers of natural resources places them in a very good position to be agents of change, and helps them influence the sustainable use of these resources.

*"I have benefited a lot from the various activities, especially on the part of gender and inclusiveness in decision making. I have been part of several platforms to share and harness experiences from diverse group of people who come with different expertise. Through the skills and knowledge acquired, I have been able to share and empower other women groups and children to assume active roles in society. As a queen mother, I also share my experiences with other traditional authorities to be proactive and involve every individual in natural resource management and other relevant decision-making processes."*



### **Sandapewuriche Mary**

Queen Mother, Damongo Traditional Area, and Member, National REDD+ Gender Sub-Working Group (GSWG)



## Building a landscape approach from existing governance structures

One of the landscape approaches being adopted by the PLUS project is the establishment of a governance working group in each landscape. This group is made up of members who represent a diversity of stakeholder groups with competing interests in each of the two landscapes and attempts to identify their priorities and common interests, and develop strategies for sustainable management of their landscapes.

The objective of the GWG is to provide the needed structure for spearheading dialogue, capacity building and decision making on issues around sustainable landscape management. GWGs in the two project landscapes continue to provide leadership and a useful platform for dialogue and galvanising collective action around sustainable natural resources management within their landscapes, using the District Assemblies as an important entry point at the local level. The GWGs are playing a central role in supporting implementation of natural resource management actions currently captured in the Four-Year Medium Term Development Plans of the various District Assemblies in the landscapes. These plans seek to streamline developmental projects and provide strategies for sustainable natural resources management at the district level. In the Mole ecological landscape for instance, the GWG has held dialogues and is working together with other stakeholders to support sustainable grazing, green charcoal initiatives and other practices which contribute to the green economy section of the plans. An action plan has been developed by the GWG which details concrete steps for enhancing sustainable practices and adequate benefit sharing arrangements through advocacy, dialogue and engagement with the District Assembly, Traditional Authorities and charcoal buyers and producers.

In the Wassa Amenfi landscape, there was no landscape-wide institutionalised platform on which to base the GWG. It was therefore agreed that the community REDD multi-stakeholder platform established under a previous REDD+ project\*\* to provide a platform for stakeholder engagement, dialogues and capacity building, would be a good starting point and basis for the establishment of the GWG.

In the Mole ecological landscape, however, three Protected Area Management Advisory Units (PAMAUs) were already in place before the PLUS project. Representatives from these PAMAUs served as the GWG as the project progressively worked with stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of the two remaining PAMAUs to pave the way for the constitution of the Protected Area Management Advisory Board (PAMAB). The PAMAUs are made up of representatives from stakeholder groups such as the Wildlife Division, Forest Services Division, security agencies, Traditional Authorities, District Assemblies and CREMAs. With the establishment of all five PAMAUs, processes have been initiated towards the constitution of a PAMAB. The PAMAB is to serve as an over-arching body to coordinate and supervise activities of the various PAMAUs within the landscape. The members of the PAMAB are to be drawn from all five PAMAUs, with some additional stakeholders. IUCN and A Rocha Ghana have initiated the process of establishing the PAMAB through an initial step of facilitating the drafting of their constitution.

Indeed, the sustainability of the GWG is key to the effective management of natural resources in the two project landscapes. The District Assemblies within the landscapes should collaborate with the PAMAUs, CREMAs and other key stakeholder to ensure sustainability. Provision should also be made for servicing of meetings of the GWG in the budget of the District Assemblies after the PLUS project has ended.

## Plugging into Ghana's community resource management success

Community Resource Management Areas represent a geographically defined area endowed with sufficient resources, or an area that demonstrates enough capacity to regenerate natural resources, where the constituent local people have organised themselves for the purposes of governance and sustainable management of their natural resources. The CREMA approach is a mechanism through which community members are given the authority and responsibility of protecting and managing their resources and the benefits obtained thereof, such as: control of access to the area by non-members, non-timber forest products, sustainable crop yields and enhanced livelihoods, ecological co-benefits, ecotourism, etc.

Five CREMAs are supported in the two project landscapes as part of the PLUS project. One in the Wassa Amenfi landscape and four in the Mole ecological landscape. These are Achichire-Sureso-Pebaseman CREMA in the Wassa Amenfi Landscape and Murugu-Mognori CREMA, Yazori-Kumbo CREMA, Bawena-Kpulumbo CREMA and Grubagu-Wawato CREMA, all in the Mole ecological landscape.

The CREMAs are governed by their constitutions, however by-laws, which are duly gazetted by the respective District Assemblies have been developed to provide legal backing to the constitutions. The by-laws also cover any CREMAs that may be established in the future within the District Assemblies. The PLUS project ensured women's representation in the executive positions of the CREMAs, and also supported them to develop comprehensive management plans to guide their activities.

*“The CREMA helped in educating farmers to plant trees in their farms which helps improve on the climatic conditions necessary for agricultural production, resulting in high yields for farmers.”*

**Nana Okofo Asafo Adjei II**  
Achichire Divisional Chief and GWG  
Chairperson, Wassa Amenfi landscape





In the Wassa Amenfi landscape, the CREMAs have assisted with tree planting, some within plantations and others on farms and in other areas. They also undertook sensitisation programmes on natural resource management and supported the enforcement of forest by-laws. Other activities of the CREMAs include establishing livelihood projects, curbing illegal mining, supporting forest guards to undertake their roles, protection of wildlife and promoting tree registration. They also establish their own tree nurseries, curb illegal chain saw activities and put in measures to prevent bush fires.

In the Mole Ecological landscape, the CREMAs augment activities of the Mole National Park by embarking on patrol duties to monitor wildlife and other activities, within their CREMA boundaries, that might be inimical to the landscape. Alternative/additional livelihood opportunities have been leveraged to improve economic conditions of community members. Shea butter, honey and other non-timber forest products constitute major economic activities in the CREMA for which much support has been provided by government and NGOs.

The PLUS project has collaborated with the National Board for Small Scale Industries through their local agency, the Business Advisory Centre, in the two project landscapes, to facilitate livelihood training for community members, with priority given to women. This is part of efforts to support CREMA members to diversify their livelihood streams, particularly during the off-cocoa season.

*“The project has ensured unity among us since we always come together to discuss issues that promote sustainable development. It has also helped us to diversify our livelihood options since we have received more support and capacity building in best practices in bee keeping and organic shea collection as well as trainings in financial and business management.”*

**Mr. James Bani**

Assistant Secretary, Murugu-Mognori CREMA



## The development of long-term strategies for natural resource management

Natural resources in the two project landscapes are dwindling due to policy, regulatory, capacity and governance limitations, occasioned by inadequate law enforcement, compliance and institutional collaboration as well as lack of a Landscape Management Strategy that defines a common vision and strategy for natural resources management. These key issues have significant implications for effective management of natural resources within the landscape.

In view of this, the PLUS project, in collaboration with key stakeholders in the two project landscapes, have facilitated the development of a Landscape Management Strategy for each of the landscapes. The strategies define a broader vision, objectives and a road map that aids all stakeholders and institutions to contribute to the effective and sustainable management of natural resources within the landscapes. Each of the two project landscapes now have a strategic framework that will help harmonise natural resource management efforts for enhanced impact which has been endorsed by all the District Assemblies within the landscapes.

In order to ensure effective implementation of the Landscape Management Strategies, District Assemblies within the two landscapes should be responsible for the implementation of the Landscape Management Strategy. Based on the strategy, each District Assembly should prepare their action plans which will guide implementation of the strategy. This should be incorporated in the Medium Term Development Plans of the districts and adequate funds and other resources allocated to ensure implementation. The development of the action plans should involve all key stakeholders in natural resource management at the district level. The GWG in both landscapes should provide oversight responsibility and coordinate the implementation of the Landscape Management Strategy at the broader landscape level. It should also ensure effective collaboration among the key stakeholders since it has representatives from key actors in natural resource management in the landscapes.



*“The Landscape Management Strategy provides a platform for all stakeholders to work towards a common goal.”*

### **Mr. Daniel Amofa**

Representative of the National Development Planning Commission on the National Steering Committee, PLUS Project





## Influencing policy for sustainable landscapes

Policy influencing is key in sustaining project interventions. It is against this background that a national steering committee for the project, made up of representatives from key government and non-state organisations in the natural resources sector, was constituted for the project's implementation in Ghana. The steering committee provides strategic directions towards implementation of the project activities both at the landscape and national levels. At the national level, the steering committee also contributes to national level discourse that influence policies on climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

IUCN collaborated with A Rocha Ghana, United Nations Development Programme, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and other key stakeholders to organise a maiden National Policy Dialogue on *Empowering Communities to Manage Natural Resources Sustainably: A Review of CREMA Implementation in Ghana*. The dialogue brought together 30 CREMA representatives from all over Ghana to engage with policy makers, development partners, the private sector and other actors. Other key stakeholders included Traditional Authorities and civil society organisations. A communique summarising all the key recommendations from the dialogue was consolidated by A Rocha Ghana and presented to the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for necessary follow-up action. A national CREMA technical working group, of which IUCN is a member, has been established to facilitate the implementation of the key recommendations from the National Policy Dialogue on CREMAs, which includes advocacy for the passing of the Wildlife Resources Management Bill. The Working group has constituted teams which have developed action plans along four thematic areas of the communique and are following up with relevant authorities to facilitate implementation. The thematic areas include Policy and Legal Frameworks for CREMAs; Process of Establishment of CREMAs and Devolution of Authority; Capacity Development of CREMAs; and Financial Sustainability of the CREMAs.

*“The Wassa Amenfi West Municipal Assembly stands to gain from the Landscape Management Strategy as it aims at efficient, effective and sustainable utilisation of natural resources for development, restoration and reclamation of degraded areas through stakeholder collaboration. The Assembly is very much committed to the implementation of the strategy through planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation, coordinating and the inclusion of CREMA activities in the Medium Term Development Plan of the Municipality.”*

**Mr. Bartholomew Bismark Duker**

Municipal Planning Officer, Wassa Amenfi West Municipal Assembly.



Land use dialogue, Wassa Amenfi

## Contributing to planning, policy and legislation

The PLUS project has also contributed to the Wildlife Resources Management Bill which is currently (January 2020) before Parliament for approval. This bill, when approved, would provide Community Resource Management Areas with strengthened legal backing. The strengthening of CREMAs would have an implication for on-going REDD+ policy actions and Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions due to the expected role CREMAs play in mobilising communities for REDD+ actions at the landscape level.

IUCN is serving on the national technical working group for Community Resource Management Area Implementation instituted by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. The idea of the Technical Working Group emanated from the National Policy Dialogue on CREMAs organised as part of the PLUS project. The technical working group is therefore serving as the driving force for the implementation of the key recommendations that came out of the dialogue. IUCN's participation provides a good opportunity to contribute to the advancement of good natural resource governance in Ghana, given the prominence of CREMAs within this space.

IUCN is as a key partner and contributor to the REDD+ process in Ghana. IUCN partnered with the Forestry Commission (National REDD+ Secretariat) to develop information materials to guide community involvement and ownership in the implementation of the Ghana Cocoa Forests REDD+ Programme. An opportunity has therefore been provided for policy integration or up-take of IUCN's efforts under the PLUS project to build governance structures at the landscape level, particularly GWGs, and how these structures can be built on and mainstreamed into the National REDD+ Governance frameworks for implementation of REDD+ at the landscape level.

At the landscape level, the Amenfi West Municipal Assembly has included CREMA activities in their Medium Term Development Plan. This was as a result of the very open and fruitful discussions that ensued from a Land Use Dialogue\*\*\* in the Wassa Amenfi Landscape. The active participation of the Municipal Chief Executive as a Co-Chair, the Presiding Member and Planning Officer of the Municipality in the Land Use Dialogue provided an opportunity for interaction and dialogue between the communities/CREMA members and the decision makers at the local level which led to this important action by the Amenfi West Municipal Assembly.





## Bringing everyone to the table

The PLUS project demonstrated that to ensure sustainable natural resource management, local and national governmental institutions, traditional authorities, local farmers, community members, NGOs, private companies, and other stakeholders must all be involved in the decision making process. The project also cemented the role of both men and women in natural resource management and facilitated the adoption of affirmative action by local stakeholders to ensure the participation of women in the decision making process. Finally, to ensure sustainability of the interventions, the project focused on supporting the fundamentals of new and existing institutions such as the GWGs, PAMAUs, CREMAs and District Assemblies, and also influenced policies at both the local and national levels.



\* Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Forestry Commission, Energy Commission, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Cocoa Board, National Development Planning Commission, Traditional Authorities, Forest Watch Ghana

\*\* Danida funded Toward Pro-Poor REDD+ Project <https://www.iucn.org/theme/forests/projects/recently-completed-projects/towards-pro-poor-redd>

\*\*\* The Land Use Dialogue Initiative, a multi-country engagement platform coordinated by The Forests Dialogue along with a variety of local and global partners, seeks to gather knowledge and lead processes enabling responsible business, improved governance and inclusive development in landscapes at risk of deforestation. <https://theforestdialogue.org/initiative/land-use-dialogue-lud>

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