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Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Quarterly Report

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Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING)

Quarterly Report

October 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014

DISCLAIMER

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I. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DA	District Assembly
DADU	District Agricultural Development Unit
DFA	Director for Finance and Administration
GC	Global Communities
GUC	Grants Under Contract
HH	Household
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
LOP	Life of Project
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MOFA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSA	Management Systems Advisors
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRCC	Northern Region Coordinating Council
PMEP	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
RING	Resiliency in Northern Ghana
RPCU	Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit
SMSA	Senior Management Systems Advisor
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOW	Scope of Work
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TA	Technical Assistance
TAC	Technical Assistance Contractor
TOT	Training of Trainers
UDS	University for Development Studies
UI	Urban Institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This first quarter of fiscal year 2015 coincided with the final quarter of district implementation of 2014 annual workplans. This quarter included the harvest of soybeans and cowpea crops, continued distributions of small ruminants, initial VSLA saving cycles, dissemination of ENA messages, completion of WASH projects, Tier One 2015 workplan development and initiation of Tier Two activities. Districts completed several projects including 58 borehole repairs and all together reaching an additional 3,173 households. This brings the total number of households benefitting from RING interventions to 8,179. Additionally, Central Gonja and Nanumba North developed a timeline to implement recommended PFM risk mitigation measures. All ten Tier One districts submitted 2015 workplans before the end of the calendar year and the start-up process for all Tier Two districts has started.

One theme that can come through clearly this quarter was the importance of learning, not just of identifying an issue, but utilizing the experiences gained from previous work. The annual work planning process began well ahead of the end of the year which allowed for a preliminary review by RING staff before the official workplan meeting in November. This review process also incorporated many lessons from individual components, for example DADU officers in Saboba and Nanumba South modified the quarantine and distribution process of small ruminants to reduce mortality, while other districts modified plans to ensure proper sequencing of activities.

While these actions represent positive movement and growth, there are several areas which require further attention. Generally, household level follow up on component activities presents a time and resource challenge which impact the quality of results. For example, soy bean crop yields on soybeans were acceptable but could be improved next year with additional planning and consistent adoption and utilization of the good agronomic practices. Household-level follow up of ENA messaging began but additional planning is needed to ensure households are adopting the behaviors not simply hearing the message. Next quarter will bring an increased focus on monitoring and data collection as well as the full engagement of the MSAs with their assigned districts.

RING staff members have continued close work with district staff counterparts in project implementation, they have also continued to seek out partnerships with local organizations and groups who can add additional value to RING activities. These connections strive to ensure that the activities among all components continue to drive towards improving nutrition and health among the target vulnerable households. Meetings from this quarter included follow up with UDS, several producer organizations, agricultural companies, business skills trainers and organizations which promote diverse nutritional crops including, among others, orange fleshed sweet potatoes. RING expects that these relationships will significantly facilitate implementation of RING activities, especially in Tier Two districts.

III. INTRODUCTION

The Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING) Program is a five-year, \$60 million dollar initiative funded by USAID/Ghana. RING is an integrated project and partnership under USAID's Feed the Future Initiative designed to contribute to the Government of Ghana's efforts to sustainably reduce poverty. Its goal is to improve the livelihoods and nutritional status of vulnerable populations in the Northern Region. It will be decentralized and employ mixed modalities for implementation interventions will be implemented through a collaborative approach with the District Assemblies (DAs) in Northern Region and with the Northern Region Coordinating Council (NRCC). For eligible DAs, USAID support and funding for district management requirements and the implementation of interventions at the community level will go directly to the DAs

The previous reporting period (July to September 2014) occurred during the start up phase of RING as well as in the middle of implementation of Tier One (G2G districts) 2014 Annual Workplan. The reporting period (October to December 2014) saw the completion of the majority of year one projects as well as the preparations and planning for year two. This report will provide updates on the status of all 17 districts, however, the component results and figures represent the achievements made by the six Tier One districts.

IV. PROGRESS BY COMPONENT AND EXPECTED RESULT

As of the submission of this this report, Global Communities does not have an approved Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP), therefore, the results per the PMEP are not reported in this section. However, the RING Team is reporting key indicators of interest to USAID as well as a summary of progress in each of the Tier One districts which have been implementing RING activities in 2014. Once the PMEP is approved, Global Communities will be reporting those results.

a. Summary Results Table

RING FY 15 Q1 Summary Indicator Results (figures are for Q1 only)		
1.) Number of people trained in child health nutrition through USG-supported Programs		
Total: 719	Male:	352
	Female:	367
2.) Number of Children Under 5 Reached		
Total: 3,173¹	Male:	1,554
	Female:	1,619
3.) Number of individuals who have received USG supported short term agriculture sector productivity or food security training		
Total: 250²	Type	
	Producer	250
	People in Government	0
	Gender	
	Male	0
	Female	250
4.) Number of rural (vulnerable) households benefiting directly from USG interventions		
Total: 3,173	Gendered HH Type³	
	Adult Female No Adult Male	158
	Adult Male No Adult Female	0
	Male and Female Adults	3,015
5.) Number of health facilities with established capacity		
Total: 0		
6.) Number of beneficiaries participating in activities designed to increase a household's resilience (i.e. receiving soya or cowpea, small ruminants, VSLA training, reducing post-harvest loss training or improved storage bags, cash payments via LEAP etc.)⁴		
	Male	0

¹ Estimated figures on assuming 1 CU5/HH served. Values based on household eligibility data provided through districts which included numbers of children under 5 per HH, but not a sex breakdown of CU5. RING team will work with Das//DHMTs to refine information based on health facility data

² Refers to new farmers of leafy-green vegetables in 10 communities in Nanumba South

³ Estimated, RING team will work with DAs to validate

⁴ RING team is interpreting participation as head of household not full family size

Total: 1390

| Female

| 1,390

Table 1 – Summary of Indicator Results

Central Gonja

Activity Indicator	District Target	FY 14 Total	Results Oct-Dec 2014	Program To Date Totals	Notes
# of DADU staff on intervention-related topics	--	18	0	18	
# of households receiving small ruminants and associated training	250	150	100	250	
# of community livestock health workers trained	13	13	0	13	Paravet Training
# of households planting soyabeans and associated training	250	250	0	250	
# of households receiving Essential Nutrition Action (ENA)	250	100	100	200	
# of groups formed to rebag and sell iodated salt	16	12	0	12	No additional groups formed this quarter and iodated salt is no longer included in RING activities
# of households benefitting from iodated salt groups	400	300	0	300	No additional benefitting households
# of communities receiving rainwater harvesting materials	10	10	0	10	This activity was completed in
# of community action plans developed	50	74	0	74	*revised from previously reported 80
# of district staff participating in staff development opportunities	5	2	0	2	No additional staff development opportunities were held
# of boreholes repaired	12	0	10	10	

Chereponi					
# of households receiving training for small ruminants	150	143	7	150	Previous quarter combined training and distribution, however, the households were trained at time of purchase and deliveries made this quarter
# of households receiving small ruminants	150	0	150	150	
# of households planting soy beans and associated training	150	150	0	150	Focus on Soil Fertility Management and Good Agronomic Practices (GAP)
# of individuals participating in Food Demonstrations	1,057	889	0	889	*revised figured
# of communities triggered in CLTS	3	3	25	28	
# of community action plans developed	10	30	0	30	Integration of health and livelihood issues into CAPs development
East Mamprusi					
# of households receiving small ruminants and associated training	250	250	0	250	750 sheep and 10 Rams for 250 households in 5 communities
# of households planting soyabeans and associated training	100	100	0	100	Originally planned 100HH in 2 communities but covered 100HH in 4 communities
# of groups formed to rebag and sell iodated salt	16	7	0	7	Original target was 16 groups in 8 communities, but due to under budgeting for inputs target was to 7 groups in 7 communities
# of households benefitting from iodated salt groups	400	175	0	175	Same note as above
# of village savings groups formed	32	0	16	16	
# of boreholes repaired	10	0	3	3	
Nanumba North					

# of groups formed to rebag and sell iodated salt / carry out milling and fortification	10	10	0	10	
# of households benefiting from iodated salt groups	150	150	0	150	
# of households planting soyabeans and associated training	250	250	0	250	Previous report was 215, individual yield figures had 250 farmers
# of health personnel trained in ENA messages	20	20	45	65	In addition to health workers, NN trained 40 SHEP, 5 ag, 16 EHO, 12 CDOs
# of community action plans developed	50	0	50	50	
# of boreholes repaired	21	0	19	19	
Nanumba South					
# of households receiving small ruminants training	500	500	0	500	
# of households receiving small ruminants	500	125	334	459	
# of households planting cowpeas and receiving associated training	500	500	0	500	
# of boreholes repaired	15	0	18	18	
# of health personnel trained in ENA messages	120	121	0	121	
# of households engaged in leafy-green vegetable cultivation	-	0	250	250	Represents 10 communities and 25 farmers in each
Saboba					
# of savings groups formed	10	20	3	23	This includes 590 group members in 23 groups in 14 communities
# of households receiving small ruminants and associated training	500	472	0	472	

# of individuals participating in Food Demonstrations	250	362	0	362	Food demonstrations focused on the utilization of soya, moringa, other nutritious foods done at the community level. Some HH reporting use of recipes or planting of moringa
# of WatSan Committees formed and trained	10	10	0	10	
# of boreholes repaired	10	0	8	8	

Table 2 – Summary of Indicator Results

a. Key Achievements

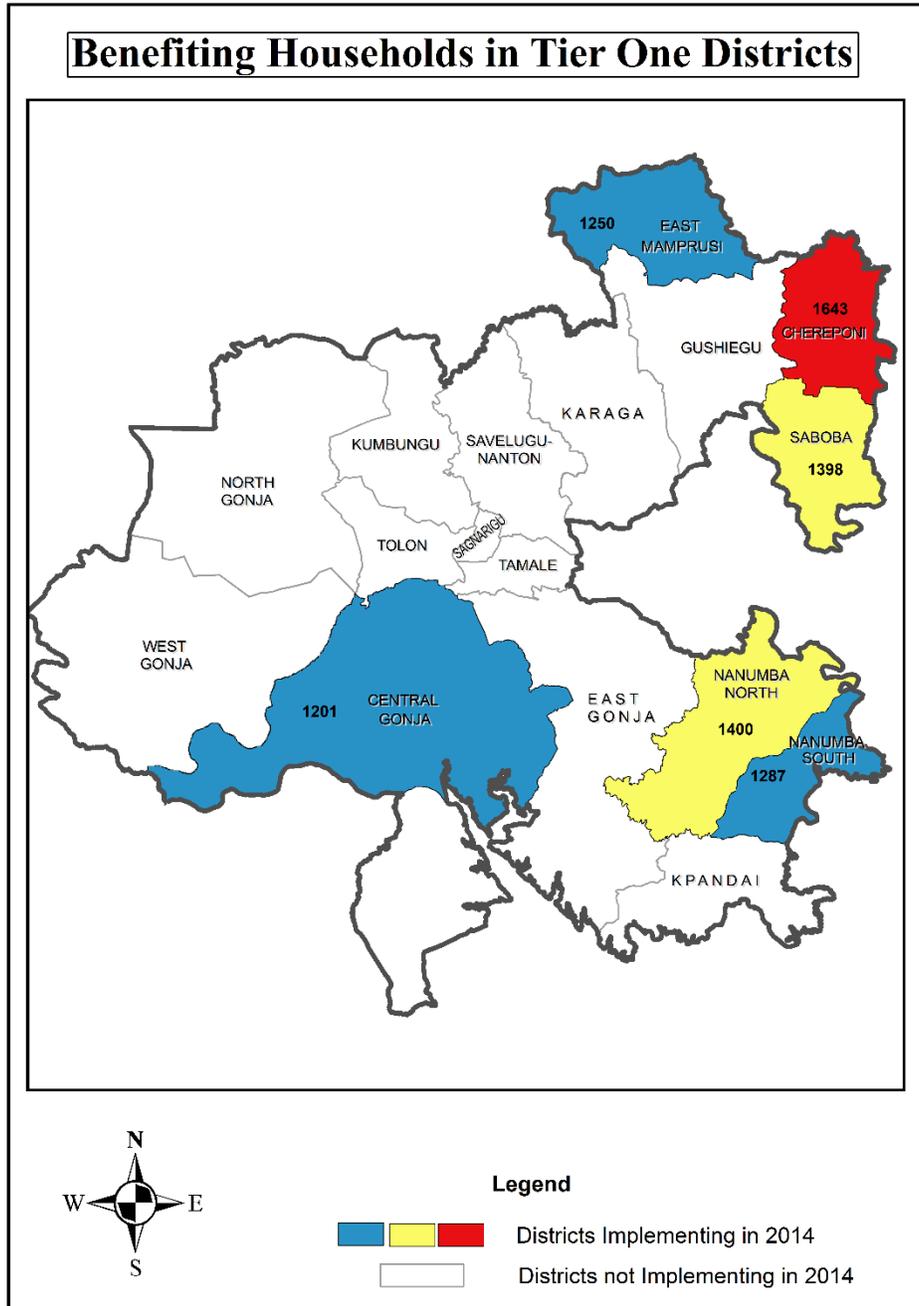


Figure 1 – Total Number of Households by district benefiting from RING projects. This is 8,179 households in 114 total communities.

Component 1

Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture

The 2014 district work plans included five districts engaged in nutrition-sensitive agriculture activities. Four districts implemented soybean cultivation while Nanumba South chose cowpea cultivation. Saboba did not include agricultural activities in the 2014 workplan. At submission of the annual report (September 30, 2014) the crops were still growing. The beneficiary farmers received training in good agricultural practices (GAP), planted and worked the fields but did not have any yield figures. Activities during the current quarter involved harvesting, threshing and bagging of the soybeans and finalization of yield data. In general, the cultivation of soybeans was successful with adequate yields for the beneficiary farmers. Discussions have indicated that the farmers are pleased with the seeds and intend to continue with the soybean cultivation next season. Central Gonja, unfortunately, suffered from an extended dry spell which impacted overall yield figures district wide. That being said, several farmers within Central Gonja still realized yields commensurate with other districts. Even with the positive response and yields there are improvements that can be made next season related to field preparation and GAP adherence.

Notably, the introduction and adoption of the improved soybean variety, Jenguma, which did generate successful yields seems to be gaining acceptance by farmers. During monitoring visits, beneficiary farmers indicated a preference for the Jenguma variety next growing season. The Jenguma variety has a stronger shell which resists shattering better than traditional varieties (Selintu 1 & 2). This variety combined with the application of GAPs enabled farmers to experience good growth and harvest, however, it is also possible that the variety is heartier and was able to grow better despite inconsistent application of all GAPs. This implies that the combination of this improved variety with better field preparation and GAPs could generate a significant improvement in future yields. Anecdotally, RING staff have noticed that some beneficiaries may have under-reported yields out of fear of possible taxation so the yield data could also be artificially depressed due to under-reporting, however, the extent of the under-reporting is not known

RING staff observed positive practices by farmers, but also noticed areas to reinforce GAP practices. Critically, farmers were engaged in the whole planning cycle, kept track of the crops, applied GAPs and harvested the fields in a timely fashion. Notably, Chereponi's Ministry of Agriculture (MOFA), organized a Field Day for beneficiary farmers during peak harvest time to encourage harvesting crops at the correct time, thereby adding a social incentive to encourage farmers to harvest correctly.

While each farmer in each district received the same training on GAPs, each district implemented the cultivation and determined plot size slightly different. East Mamprusi, for example, had two-acre fields while Nanumba North opted for pilot plots of 10 x 10 meters or .025 acres per farmer. As a result, the absolute yield data can be misleading but the data can be transformed for comparison.

District	Total Yield (Kgs)	# of farmers
Nanumba North	1,852.30	250
Central Gonja	17,758.75	117
Chereponi	50,660.00	143
East Mamprusi	66,650.00	100

Table 3: Absolute District Soybean Yields. N.B. each district had different plot sizes, and total

Following harvest, DADU officers traveled to each community to conduct a weighing exercise. Yields were recorded for each beneficiary and shared with the RING staff. The calculations were done in “bowls” and “bag” with a bowl containing 2.5 kgs and a bag containing 100 kgs. The data was converted to kilograms and yield calculated based on acreage. Note, Nanumba North had a similar yields but acreage was significantly lower resulting in a much lower absolute yield.

The yield per acre figures are on the lower end of “good” with Central Gonja being very low largely due to excessively dry weather conditions. Upon further examination, however, the figures within each community show tremendous variation – even Central Gonja.

Although yields are low, the main success was in the processes and even the outliers which can be exceptions which prove the rule. District averages taken individually can be misleading given the tremendous variance due to the small number of communities implementing the soybean cultivation which results in a single low performing community skewing averages.

District	Average of Yield Kg /Acre	Yield Standard Deviation	Min of Yield kg/Acre	Max of Yield kg/Acre	%RSD
Central Gonja	70.19	68.04	-	800.00	96.93%
Chereponi	354.27	125.89	150.00	600.00	35.54%
East Mamprusi	333.25	91.93	100.00	600.00	27.59%
Nanumba North	296.37	162.05	8.00	1,108.00	54.68%

Table 4 – Soybean Yield Data

Comparing each district’s relative standard deviation (%RSD) demonstrates extreme variability in the data sets. Central Gonja’s results were the most variable, likely due to the weather conditions. While Chereponi and East Mamprusi had the lowest relative variability among individual farmers, they still exhibited tremendous variability, just comparatively less than other districts. This is consistent with the results observed by RING staff which indicated variation in the adoption of all of GAP practices. It is not possible to say which practices would produce higher yields, however, some inferences can be made by examining extreme cases. In Central Gonja there was an individual farmer who generated a yield of 800 kilograms (8 bags) from an acre plot. When RING staff followed up, the major difference was weeding the field three times while other farmers weeded only once. While not conclusive, this suggests that even in harsh conditions yields can be high when fully following GAPs. (For additional information, see success story in attached Annex). Other factors contributing to lower yields include late ploughing and planting times. The following table outlines the three primary categories which may have contributed to lower than ideal soybean yields.

Factor	Observations	Suggested Modifications
Pre-planting planning	Tractor services and seed supply to soybean beneficiaries were late in all 4 districts. Interactions with both MOFA extension agents and RING beneficiaries agreed the soybean fields were not ploughed on time. These facts were visible during farm visits by RING technical team and MOFA extension agents.	Engaging all relevant departments earlier in the planting cycle to ensure not only the technical specifications are worked out, but the required funds are requested and available in advance of the field preparation times.
Beneficiary Utilization of GAPs	Sub-optimal farm maintenance by some farmers included delayed weeding, improper plant population and spacing. In some cases organic pesticides were applied to crops, but applied at the wrong time and washed away by rains.	Additional follow up by both RING staff and district officers to not just observe growth but to reinforce GAPs. Additional events such as harvest day can be used in a community or district with one event dedicated to each GAP.
Circumstances beyond control of the program	Weather and dry spells. Rodent infestations,	While it is not possible to control the weather, introduction of irrigation (drip or other) and additional water storage could mitigate some weather related risks.

Table 5 – Summary of agriculture practice gap observations

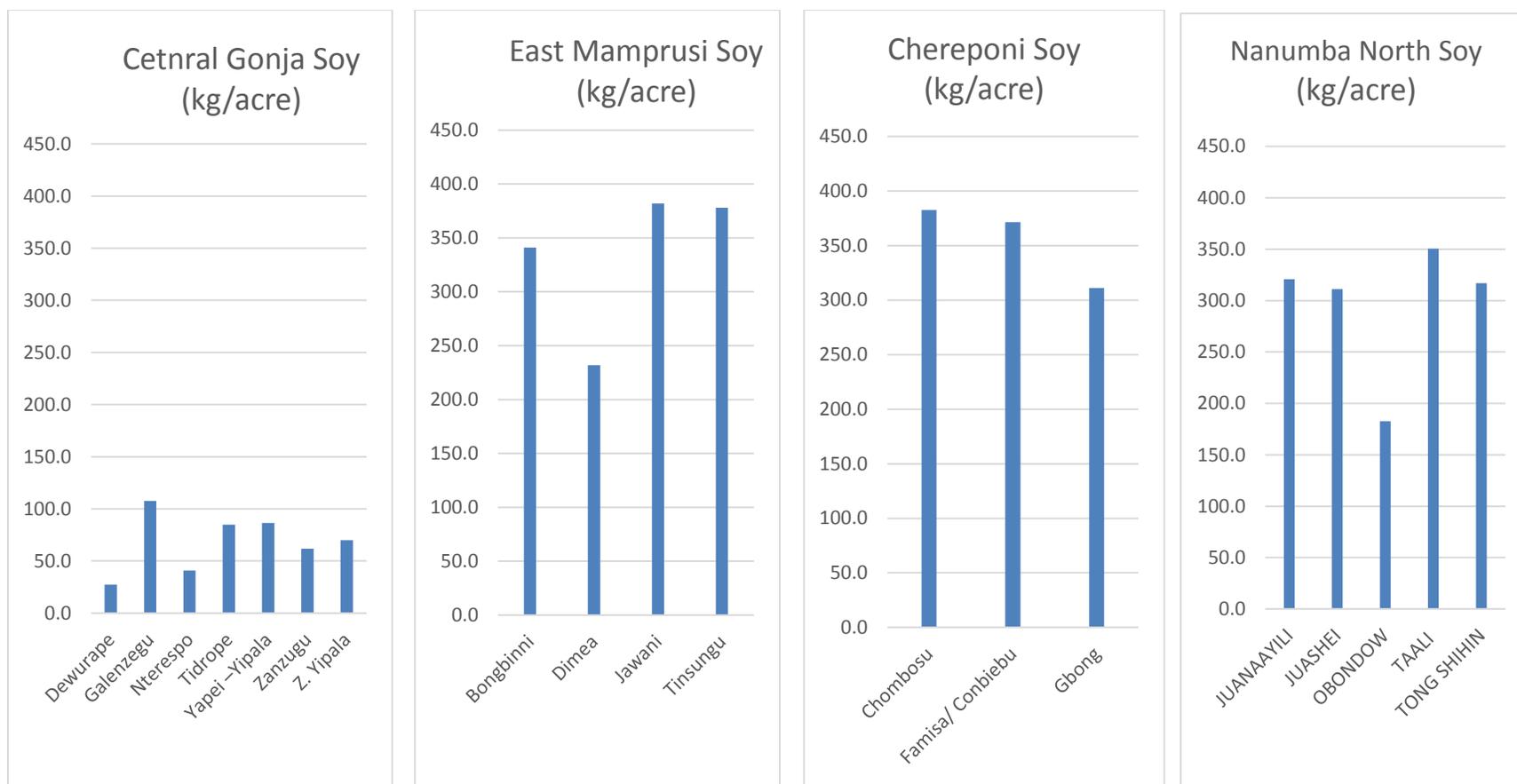


Figure 2 – Performance of RING Soybean Farmers in 2014.

The metric shown is the average yield (kg) per acre in each community based on the individual reported yields of each farmer.

N.B. within each district there is some variability among the communities. RING staff will follow up to examine causes for variation. Dimea’s figures are much lower than other communities in East Mamprusi but almost all farmers reported the same yield so this variation could be due to under-reporting.

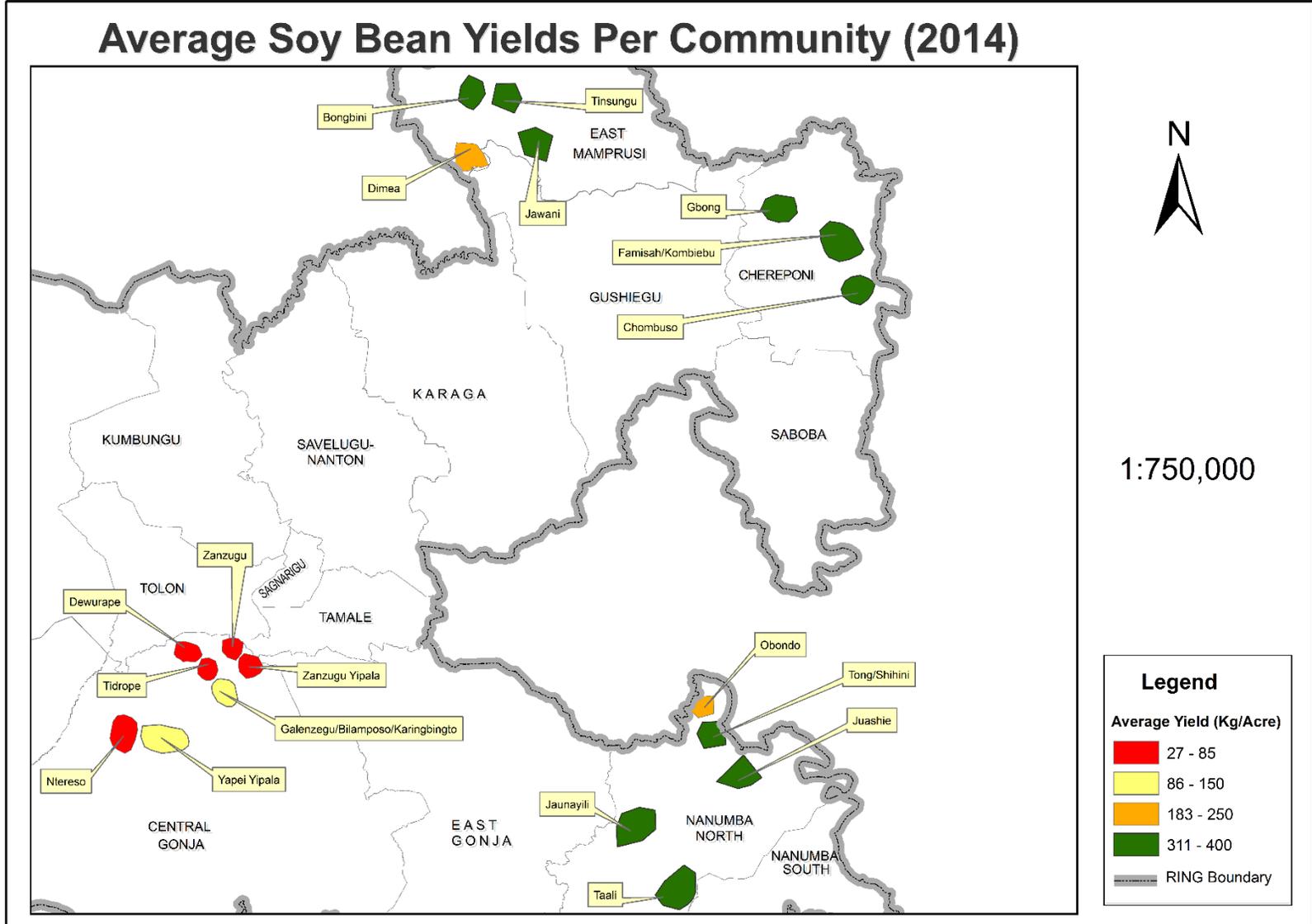


Figure 3 – Soybean yields per community

RING focuses not only on cultivation but also on the utilization of the crops to improve household resiliency and nutrition. Once harvested, the soybeans can be incorporated into diets of beneficiary farmers for improved nutrition, stored, or sold. Some households in Yapei Yipala, Central Gonja, have already incorporated part of the harvest into their diet including in dishes like porridge, dawadawa, toubानी. The same beneficiary in Central Gonja with the exceptionally high yield (eight 100kg bags) has sold 2 bags and stored the remainder to utilize in the household or for sale later. Other farmers are also keeping the harvested soybeans in storage for better prices later in the season. Post-harvest utilization of the soybeans will be an important follow up area for the RING livelihoods team in the coming quarters.

As 2015 planting season approaches, the two most critical areas to focus on will be the necessary pre-planting supplies and services available to farmers. The planting season of 2014 had several delays at different steps in the process; while each individual delay may not be very significant, taken together the result can mean losing out on significant yields. Second, more follow up work needs to be done with individual farmers to improve proper GAP adherence. RING staff have observed that farmers follow practices, but not always in the most optimal ways – i.e. uneven rows, insufficient weeding. The RING team has already engaged DAs to allocate more funding and time for monitoring visits by extension agents. As the number of farmers increase in coming quarters, this level of attention could prove challenging for the DA and RING resources and may be an opportunity to leverage partnerships with local organizations to provide supplemental extension services and training. The MSAs will be able to visit farm sites and help coordinate communication and identify communities where additional time, resources and follow up are required. Additionally, the RING team will examine methods to make personal protective equipment to farmers including boots and hand gloves through collaboration with other programs.

Nanumba South did not plant soybeans but instead opted for cowpeas. Unfortunately production was extremely low with some fields failing completely. This failure can be attributed to dry weather conditions which prevented some plants forming seeds, pest infestations by insects, including rodents who consumed crops well before harvest time. Nanumba South is currently the only district to actively support dry-season cultivation of leafy green vegetables. District staff began working with 10 communities to complete site selection, land preparation, and seedbed raising. Four types of traditional leafy green vegetables have been promoted, including cowpea leaves, amaranthus, sabderiffa and jute leaves. Early monitoring visits by the livelihoods team demonstrate that there is a need for a consistent and efficient source of water for vegetables as well as improved pest control. RING technical staff have met with B-Agric to examine the use of Family Drip Irrigation with these communities.

Progress on Small Ruminants

Despite initial challenges in the mortality of small ruminants district mortality rate stabilized last quarter with some communities demonstrating an increase in the total number of animals resulting from an increase in live lambs. Although the net figures within many communities still remain low recent monitoring visits report lower rates of mortality with some communities starting to show net increases in the total number of live animals. The RING Livelihoods team expects the stabilization to continue, but this will be contingent upon dedicated follow up by DA and RING staff, to ensure that beneficiaries are fully utilizing their training. For example, RING staff have observed that some farmers have a separate shelter for their animals but do not always remember to put the animals in the shelter. A potential risk moving forward, the DA staff may be constrained in their ability to visit both new and existing communities on a regular basis. This

challenge highlights the need for additional identification and mobilization of community livestock workers.

For all small ruminant interventions, the critical activity for farmers during the reporting period was gathering the proper quantity and type of feed to use during the dry season. District agriculture officers and RING staff have disseminated messages to households in Saboba, Chereponi, Nanumba South, East Mamprusi and Central Gonja about types of suitable material. During monitoring visits, RING staff has observed households gathering groundnut tops and vines, bean husks, cassava and yam peels as fodder for dry season feeding.

During the quarter, monitoring progress remained a challenge for district staff and it was not possible for DADU staff to conduct weekly monitoring visits. The first line of defense against the mortality has been the community livestock workers (CLWS). These are volunteers who can be called upon to perform minor and routine veterinary checks including castrations, de-worming and treatment of diarrhea, CLWs cannot provide advanced medical care but can alert para-vets when problems arise. Until recently it appears the primary concern of the CLWs is on livestock health related issues, moving forward the skills of CLWs can be broadened. CLWs also provide a key link and cross check for RING staff as sometimes DADU figures are late or require follow up. The CLWs generally have telephones and can be reached to provide additional details on individual cases and trends. CLWs represent community ownership and a means of sustainability so increasing engagement through joint visits with para-vets and other activities could serve to incentivize CLWs to remain active rather than waiting for a para-vet or DADU visit.

Factor	Suggestion
Establishing proper training sequencing with beneficiary communities	Districts should continue following proper purchasing and quarantine procedures for stock acquisition and ensure farmers are trained prior to distribution.
Dedicated follow up by DADU and RING staff	Individual/group follow ups on each key training point as well as overall health checks.
Community/Beneficiary interest and ownership	Ongoing refresher trainings
Environmental Factors	The dry season tends to reduce mortality so routine para-vet visits could be reduced, but increase again during the wet season.

Table 6 – Suggested Follow Up to Maintain Low Ruminant Mortality

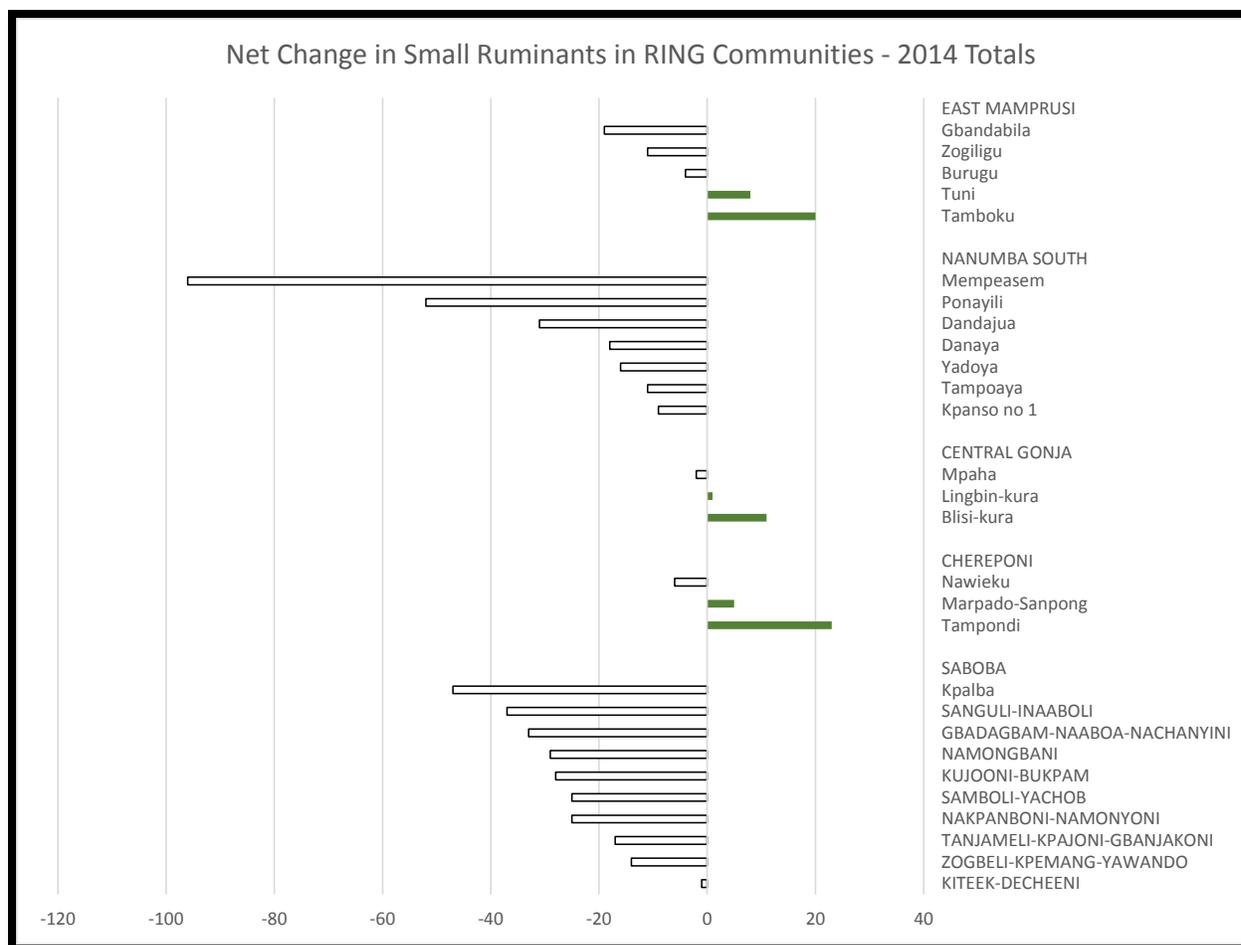


Figure 4 – Net change in Small Ruminants by Community.

This figure shows the net change (not total animals) in each community.

N.B. Validation of the figures is ongoing in several communities, some figures may change next quarter and others have not yet been included.

Progress on VSLAs Implementation

Under component one a key integration point for the promotion of better nutrition and resiliency is the inclusion of beneficiaries, especially women, in activities to develop and maintain income. The village savings and lending associations (VSLA) have progressed substantially during the quarter. Prior to October, 2014 critical planning and training occurred, but in this last period the groups began meeting and generating savings for the members. In the quarter East Mamprusi and Saboba were the only districts with active groups. The piloting process included identification of households to participate, review of materials, conducting a training of trainers by RING staff followed by group formation by district staff. One notable lesson learned was regarding the size of the groups relative to the community. Originally plans called for one group per community, however, a “community” could include several smaller villages far apart from each other. As districts began implementing they formed more groups than there are communities, so in Saboba, for example, there are 23 groups from 14 communities.

Both Saboba and East Mamprusi district staff monitored initial group performance at the end of the quarter. In Saboba members had contributed 24,848 GHC to the savings groups, while East

Mamprusi’s members contributed 23,690 GHC. As the groups are still early in the VSLA cycle, many have not yet issued loans or collected repayments. Several groups, especially in Saboba, are considering purchasing group assets such as grain as a means to generate returns for the members. Traditionally, members would seek loans only during the planting season, meaning that at other times the saved money would be idle in the group box and not generating returns for the members. The VSLA will utilize the saved currency to procure grains which will be stored from harvest time until such a time as the price for the grains increase. The VSLA groups will be purchasing grain from farmers and will likely to be completed by the end of January 2015, at which point the VSLA will wait for the price to climb and sell at the appropriate time; at least 30 days but not more than 150 days after the purchase.

District	Status
Chereponi	<p>Chereponi included VSLA activities in the 2014 workplan. With the assistance of RING technical staff they identified the focal person and a 6-member implementation team (6 members total; 2 MOFA field officers, 2 Community development officers and 2 officers from the Business Advisory Center of the CDA.</p> <p>This team received ToT training in November based on the pilot experiences from Saboba. The workplan included the formation and training for 32 groups. As of the end of 2014, 16 had been trained on group dynamics and the training will continue.</p>
Nanumba North	<p>Included VSLAs in 2015 workplans but began the internal setup process this quarter. They formed the VSLA team consisting of the Cooperative Officer who is the VSLA focal person along with a 4 additional members (2 Community development officers, 2 Assistant Planning Officers). Group formation and training will begin in early 2015</p>
Central Gonja	<p>Included VSLA activities in the 2015 plan and have identified Business Advisory Center (BAC) Officer as the focal person.</p>
Savelugu	<p>Included VSLA activities in the RING 2015 work plan and identified the Social Welfare and Community Development Officer as the focal person along with 3 members of the implementation team (the District Cooperative officer, 2 Community Development officers)</p>
West Gonja	<p>Included VSLA activities in 2015 work plan, but are still early in the planning stages. The focal person has been identified but are yet to complete team formation and schedule ToT.</p>

Table 7 – VSLA District Status

Component 2

Component 2 activities focused on two main areas – completion of WASH activities, and the dissemination of health messages by district-trained staff to households. Central Gonja, Nanumba North and Saboba conducted their final ENA trainings early in the quarter and then began the process of monitoring message delivery. The WASH activities primarily focused on the larger-scale borehole repairs, the associated water and sanitation committee (WatSan) trainings and CLTS triggering. The hand washing installations and accompanying training of school health teachers originally planned for this quarter was delayed and is scheduled to be completed by the end of January, 2015.

An important step forward this quarter was the initiation of follow up visits and monitoring by district health officers. As most target audiences received ENA and CMAM trainings in previous quarters or early in this quarter, the next step is to check the trainees are integrating their knowledge to their work and that the target population also received the messages. Nanumba South district staff went out to communities and conducted interviews with SHEP teachers, Agricultural Extension Agents and school children to hear from them if the ENA messages were in fact reaching them. Saboba staff went to interview previously trained health workers on their progress. Saboba, additionally has budget for increased community message dissemination through durbars in their 2015 workplan. Central Gonja also interviewed previously trained community health volunteers (CHVs) as follow up to see how CHVs had integrated ENA messages to their work. These monitoring visits were essentially interview-based spot checks and did not involve the collection of quantitative figures. Next quarter RING staff will organize joint monitoring activities at the household level to gather additional quantitative follow up data. As MSAs and RING staff followed up independently with community members, anecdotally, it appears that CHVs have been delivering ENA messages as part of their routine work within the community. In Central Gonja specifically, community volunteers, such as Salfo Adam in Zanzugu are taking the opportunity they have when referring cases to CHPS staff to also deliver ENA messages (see success story in annex).

The initiation of monitoring by district staff represents a positive step forward, but also one that can be extremely time consuming. As the key measure of success is the both the receipt and utilization of ENA messages at the household level. Next quarter RING staff will work with districts to reviewing household monitoring practices to ensure that the monitoring visits will be an efficient use of time and resources. RING will also utilize the assigned MSAs in each district to assist with monitoring activities such as following with CHPS staff and CHVs and, when possible, conduct household visits. Equally important will be establishing a feasible monitoring schedule which provides the necessary level of detail while not burdening staff with inefficient monitoring; the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) method may be an efficient way forward to meet these challenges.

RING staff has also been meeting with the Northern Region Health Directorate to develop work a plan for the coming year. The NRHD activities for 2015 have been incorporated into the NRCC's budget and primarily support monitoring activities and additional health trainings. RING has also been in close contact with the acting Northern Region Health Director about addressing Ebola prevention through the procurement of hand washing stations and materials, infrared thermometers and dissemination of BCC messaging through radio and print.

The Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) activities continued in three districts this quarter. The main focus was on triggering new communities to begin the CLTS process and start on their way towards open defecation free (ODF) status. RING MSAs visited several communities who were triggered in the previous quarter to review their progress towards ODF status. The communities are making progress and some communities appear to be effectively ODF, but have not yet been certified as such. In January, the Regional Environmental health officer is scheduled to complete visits CLTS communities applying to be certified as ODF. After these visits are complete the results are expected to come in next quarter. Communities have expressed a lot of interest in completing the CLTS process once triggered. Gbalo in Chereponi, for example, was triggered in November and many community members have completed their latrines and are now proud of their community (see success story in annex). Community visits by MSAs indicated that in some communities the dug latrines caved in after construction. Possible explanations for this would be the timing of latrine construction after rains so the soil was not as firm. As CLTS

requires a time investment from community members, the planning process should take in to account potentially busy times of the year and communities should not be triggered during peak labor times.

The major project expenditures this quarter were for borehole rehabilitation and repair. The borehole repairs require both the “hardware” of required spare parts and “software” of engaged water and sanitation committees to work well over the long term. While Watsan committees existed prior to RING those in target communities may have been effectively inactive. Watsan committees will generally, among other activities, perform minor borehole maintenance, provide security, collect funds from community members (if applicable), and engage area mechanics when necessary for larger repairs. As with the agricultural activities, planning proved to be a critical factor in efficient implementation, especially sequencing assessments, funds requests, and supply procurement to take advantage of favorable weather conditions. Small individual delays at each step contributed to later than ideal implementation. Additionally Central Gonja conducted borehole assessments during the rainy season so when the rehabilitation began, they realized they had not procured enough supplies. Independent of the assessment issue, there were delays at the district level in obtaining the proper signatures and requests in a timely fashion to get funds. Even when procurements were completed and funds available the actual acquisition of required spare parts also presented challenges as the Northern Region did not necessarily have the correct spare parts available. This increased transit/delivery costs and delayed implementation further as proper parts had to be purchased from as far away as Kumasi. Ideally the borehole repairs would occur in the dry season (March to May) to ensure that materials can reach the build sites in time to take advantage of the weather.

Salt re-bagging proved to be a continued challenge this quarter. Both Central Gonja and East Mamprusi did not acquire sachets necessary for the salt groups. Nanumba North groups started re-bagging salt towards the end of the reporting period but group sales figures have not been collected.

The process of sub-contracting Component 2a with JSI and partners is in progress. A statement of work based off Component 2a has been agreed upon and the budget is under preparation. Additionally, JSI has reached out to SPRING partners for final approval.

Component 3

The quarter’s activities included further implementation of PFM risk mitigation plans, developing district 2015 annual work plans, completing previously delayed staff capacity trainings, and initiating the start-up activities for all Tier Two districts. The lessons learned from the 2014 work planning process were utilized this quarter by getting an earlier start on annual workplan and budget preparation. Additionally, RING staff provided a preliminary review prior to the Annual Work planning meeting thereby allowing districts to make necessary modifications well ahead of schedule. Nine of the ten Tier One districts arrived to the AWP session with fully developed work plans. While only one district met the mid-December deadline agreed to at the workshop, all

districts submitted 2015 workplans for USAID review by December 30th – a significant improvement from 2014 where submissions occurred as late as the end of March. Approval of the workplans and budgets is expected by USAID by the last week of January 2015. This year a performance metric was added to the annual workplan review process whereby each district's 2015 budget ceiling was tied to their 2014 performance thus far.

District	2015 Budget Ceiling (USD)
Central Gonja	350,000
Chereponi	325,000
East Mamprusi	350,000
Nanumba North	250,000
Nanumba South	300,000
Saboba	325,000
Savelugu-Nanton	300,000
Tamale Metro	260,000
Tolon	300,000
West Gonja	300,000

Table 8 – District 2015 Ceiling Figures

RING Municipal Finance Specialists conducted Public Financial Management (PFM) Risk Mitigation Planning and Implementation meetings with Nanumba North and Central Gonja in December. The primary focus of these sessions were to finalize concrete plans and timelines addressing the findings of the initial USAID Finance Team's assessment. Importantly, all district staff directly involved with the financial risks, including the DCD, attended the meetings. RING staff will complete PFM risk mitigations with the remaining Tier One districts this upcoming quarter with a priority on Chereponi, East Mamprusi, Nanumba South and Saboba. RING staff will also be following up on PFM risk mitigation plan progress with Central Gonja and Nanumba North. Below are the implementation schedules for addressing identified risks in Central Gonja and Nanumba North.

Central Gonja

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
Preparation of Budget Management Procedures	The budget and financial reports are produced regularly,	The <u>Budget Officer</u> in collaboration with the <u>District Coordinating Director & Finance</u>	Mid-February

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
Management Orientation on New Budget Procures including variance reporting	however the data was not used by management to aid in decision making or analyzed as a way of monitoring the budget. There was no documentary evidence of management questioning variances or issuing queries of expenditure variation. In addition the variance report should include year to date variance and not just monthly variance.	<p>Officer will develop procedures for Budget Management. This will include the designing of a budget monitoring template which allows budget holders to comment on variances and guidance on budget variance</p> <p>The Budget Officer requested support from RING Technical Finance Team on the development of a Budget Monitoring & Variance Reporting Template</p>	End of March
Preparation of fixed assets register	There are no detailed fixed asset records nor is there any effort to maintain a reconciliation of physical count of fixed assets to fixed asset records.	<p>The District Finance Officer in collaboration with the District Stores officer, Internal Auditor will prepare an electronic Fixed Asset Register (excel based). This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of Asset • Date of Purchase • Asset Number • Amount • Expected Life • Depreciation • Any Residual Value • Date of Disposal • Asset Description <p>RING Technical Finance Team will monitor and provide guidance where necessary.</p>	End of March
Preparation of Risk Management Procedures	There is currently no risk analysis done at the district level. Management is not engaged in risk analysis and related mitigation. In addition, there is no formal policy on fraud detection or reporting.	Internal Auditor in collaboration with the District Coordinating Director will develop a Risk Management Procedures. This will include the District's risk identification, analysis and evaluation mechanisms and most importantly the designing of a risk register / log sheet.	End of March
Preparation of Procurement training plan and implement in collaboration with PPA	There is currently no training plan for staff on procurement issues. Lack of funding has been cited as a reason for lack of training	Procurement Officer and Budget officer in collaboration with the Human Resource officer and the Public Procurement Authority will prepare a detailed training budget for the procurement staff.	January to March
Preparation of Filing Policy	There is a perceived need for improvement of the organization of the procurement files. It is not evident that the files contain all of the required documents for a particular procurement. There is a need for filing cabinets and a formalized filing system.	The District Coordinating Director (DCD) and Principal Executive Officer will develop Filing Policy. This will include guidance on the filling of confidential information as per the Data Protection Act 2012 (Act 843) guidance.	End of March
Procurement of filing Cabinets			End of March

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
Preparation of IT Plan	The development of formal IT policies and an IT plan for the district does not exist. The policies would lay out the requirements for backup, virus protection, login and password requirements along with other policies. There is also a need for an IT plan to enable the district to strategically move toward an integrated system. The plan would include the integration of GIFMIS, identifying software and hardware needs, network development along with other areas for planning.	<p>The MIS Officer (Agric) in collaboration with the District Planning Officer & District Coordinating Director (DCD) will develop an IT policy for Assembly. This will include policies on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptable Use • Access Controls • Data Back-up • Protection against virus. • Continuity Plan <p>RING Technical Finance Team will monitor and a provide guidance where necessary.</p>	End of March
Updated of personnel files	Personnel files are incomplete at the district level. Most of the positions, especially senior positions, are hired centrally but there are some support staff that are hired locally. There are not complete records kept on staff hired by each district.	<p>Human Resource Officer (HRO)in collaboration with the DCD will update all personnel files and create new files for casual workers employed within the district.</p>	End of January
Introduce the use of Attendance Register	A time and attendance notebook is kept in the office of the administrator where staffs are required to sign in and out on a daily basis. Details such as the name, date time-in, time out and signature is the information sited in the log book. Information received on this log book is not used as a basis for the payment of salaries.	<p>The HRO with the supervision of the DCD will document the process in validating timesheet to Controller Accountant General Department.</p>	End of January
Transfer of Pre-audit function to the Finance Department	The current responsibilities of the internal auditor include "pre-audit". This is where the internal auditor examines vouchers to make sure all the information is complete and the payment is in conformity with policies and procedures. The auditor is thus part of the payment process. It would be good to remove this function from the internal auditor. The auditor would then be available	<p>Although it is a statutory requirement that the pre-audit function should be executed by the internal auditor, the DCD has agreed to transfer the function from the internal auditor in consultation with the Finance Committee.</p>	End of January

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
	to audit the transactions at a later date		
Preparation of Audit Report Tracking System	CGDA appears to be taking on audit recommendations seriously and pushes hard to resolve issues. In fact, CGDA has a basic tracking system in place. However, the system does not provide statistics such as number closed. As is with other district, CGDA uses ARIC as one of its tool to track audit recommendation status.	Internal Auditor and District Finance Officer with support and guidance from the RING Technical Finance Team will develop an electronic based audit tracking system.	End of March

Table 9 – Central Gonja PFM Action Plan

Nanumba North

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
Preparation of Budget Management Procedures	Variance reports as produced only contain numerical calculations. There are no narratives providing analysis on possible cause.	The Budget Officer in collaboration with the Internal Auditor (IA) & District Finance Officer will design an electronic Budget Monitoring & Variance Analysis and Reporting Template. This will be flexible for budget holders to comment on variances. The District Coordinating Director (DCD) requested support from RING Technical Finance Team on the development of a Budget Monitoring & Variance Reporting Template.	End of January
Management Orientation on New Budget Procures including variance reporting			End February
Preparation of fixed assets register	Fixed assets are managed in a very rudimentary method. A record is kept of the cost and location of the asset with other pertinent information omitted. In addition, an inventory of fixed assets is not performed on a regular basis.	The District Finance Officer in collaboration with the Senior Stores officer , will prepare an electronic Fixed Asset Register (excel based). This will include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of Asset • Date of Purchase • Asset Number • Amount • Expected Life • Depreciation • Any Residual Value • Date of Disposal • Asset Description 	End of March

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
		The District Coordinating Director (DCD) has requested support from RING Technical Finance Team.	
Preparation of Procurement training plan	There is currently no training plan for staff on procurement issues. Lack of funding has been cited as a reason for lack of training.	Procurement Officer in collaboration with the Human Resource officer will prepare a detailed training plan & budget for officials involved in procurement.	End of March
Review of internal audit procedures	Samplings of payment vouchers indicate some payments, especially internally generated funds, lack the "pre-audit" approval.	The District Finance officer in collaboration with the Internal Auditor will review and document a guide on the payment of Internally Generated Funds.	End of January
Develop Bank Reconciliation sign-off procedures	Bank reconciliations did not consistently have the signature of the DCE indicating review and approval. In addition there were some bank reconciling items that remained open for many months.	The District Finance Officer will prepare guidance & procedure for month –end bank reconciliation including with special notes of signing offs.	End of January
Updated of personnel files	Personnel files are incomplete at the district level. Most of the positions, especially senior positions, are hired centrally but there are some support staff that are hired locally. There are not complete records kept on staff hired by each district.	Human Resource Officer (HRO) in collaboration with the District Coordinating Director (DCD) will update all personnel files and create new files for casual workers employed within the district	End of March
Introduce the use of Attendance Register	There are no official time and attendance records being kept. Staffs are not required to submit documentation indicating their time worked. It appears that each officer is aware of daily staff attendance but there is no formal documentation.	The HRO with the supervision of the DCD will send memo to staff in January 2015 advising them that salary payment will be linked to actual work output using the attendance register.	End Of January
Transfer of Pre-audit function to the Finance Department	The current responsibilities of the internal auditor include "pre-audit". This is where the internal auditor examines vouchers to make sure all the information is complete and the payment is in conformity with policies	This is a statutory requirement and the DCD stated that, they can only comply with the USAID recommendation after the amendment of the Internal Audit Agency Act (Act.658 2003) and the Financial Memoranda for District Assemblies (2004)	End of January

USAID RECOMMENDED MITIGATION MEASURES	USAID IDENTIFIED RISK	ACTION	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE/ TIME FRAME
	and procedures. The auditor is thus part of the payment process.		
Preparation of Audit Report Tracking System	There is no audit recommendation tracking system in place. ARIC meetings, while indicative of the District working to resolve audit recommendations, did not provide a proper tracking system showing current status of audit recommendations.	<p>Internal Auditor in collaboration with the DCD will develop an electronic based audit tracking system.</p> <p>The DCD has requested support from the RING Technical Finance Team</p>	End of March
Prepare meeting schedule for ARIC	Management asserts that ARIC has met in 2013 there were not any minutes to substantiate the meetings.	The Internal Auditor with supervision of the DCD will prepare a meeting schedule for the Audit Report Implementation Committee (ARIC) and ensure that meeting are held and minutes duly recorded.	End of January

Table 10 – Nanumba North PFM Action Plan

During these PFM mitigation meetings, district officials displayed enthusiasm for implementing the actions as they see this as directly relevant to their FOAT scores, future USAID assessments and, ultimately, future funding levels.

As part of the PFM risk mitigation planning, one issue requiring additional attention emerged, The “pre-audit” function, under current practice and regulations, is the responsibility of the Internal Auditor. He/She examines the submitted vouchers as a compliance check. This role effectively involves the auditor in the payment process which then raises concerns about ensuring segregation of duties. Further discussion with the NRCC on this policy is necessary to clarify how districts should proceed.

Districts originally planned staff capacity building trainings throughout the year, however, with project start-up and implementation delays, these trainings were initially postponed to this quarter. Even with these initial postponement, several trainings were further delayed until the 2015 implementation year. Trainings completed this quarter included the following:

District	Trainings and Workshops
Central Gonja	ICT (38 participants – 15 female), PFM Review (26 participants – 5 female)
East Mamprusi	ICT (27, Day 1 & 34, Day 2), GPS (9 participants), Procurement (25 participants)
Nanumba North	PFM Review (9 participants)

Table 11 – RING Sponsored Trainings and Workshops

Tier Two Progress

RING staff along with the NRCC visited all seven Tier Two districts to begin the roll on process by presenting RING its objectives and process. District staff had the opportunity to ask questions and gain clarity on the how their districts will be incorporated in to RING. Following the introductory meetings, RING staff held inception meetings with the expanded District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU) in Sagnerigu and Kumbungu districts. Districts are enthusiastic to begin work and have already expressed interest in connecting small-scale producers in their district with more lucrative markets. Following the inception meetings districts collected data necessary in assessing community vulnerability, including population, water access and DADU services. Additional information on community health statistics is necessary and will be coming from Ghana Health Services in early 2015. The remaining five districts will complete their inception meetings during this upcoming quarter with all preliminary activities (household selection) scheduled to be completed by May so that funds will be available for project implementation in June.

b. New Developments Impacting Implementation

Recent changes to Federal Acquisition Rules (FAR) does not allow Global Communities to use the Grants Under Contract Mechanism to fund Tier Two districts over the life of the program.

c. Grants and Sub-Awards

- **Grants Under Contract**

See section b

- **Sub-Contracts**

There is no update to this section for this reporting period.

- **Innovation Fund**

There is no update to this section for this reporting period.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation

During this reporting period technical assistance from Global Communities’ headquarters Knowledge Management and Evaluation (KME) team supported the RING team in start up M&E

activities, establishing mapping capabilities and identifying priority areas moving forward. RING completed and submitted a draft Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) to METTS in October 2014. METTS provided commentary and feedback in December. Global Communities will submit the PMEP for USAID review and approval during the first week of February.

The most substantial progress has been made on developing key datasets, completing a household database, developing reference maps and, most importantly, matching households from the database to specific points on the map using GPS technology. As part of the start up process each district identified vulnerable communities and vulnerable households within the community. Once the MSAs and other officers were hired the, GIS officer trained them in the use of Android-based GPS point collection tool so that they could go to visit communities to validate household lists and at the same time map the locations of the households. Currently RING has the following datasets which are geo-referenced:

- Shapefiles of new district boundaries and community outlines;
- GPS locations of 95 of 114 communities receiving benefits;
- GPS coordinates of 2,092 households

While each household has an ID generated, the person listed as receiving the benefit in district monitoring reports is not usually the same person listed as the head of household from the enumeration forms. Once we have fully integrated the data collection process, it will possible to generate household-level performance maps. For example, this quarter DADU provided household level data of soybean production but those figures have not yet been matched to the household IDs. Currently, the GPS data is housed locally on the RING computers, but in the coming quarter RING will take advantage of its ArcGIS Online to ensure make key maps available online for review.

USAID approved Christopher Gegenheimer as Key Personnel M&E Specialist in December 2014. Local staff hiring, however, proved challenging as there have been several local candidates who have completed the recruitment process but failed to report after accepting a position. MSAs have provided valuable M&E assistance in this quarter, but moving forward recruitment will accelerate to onboard the remaining M&E staff.

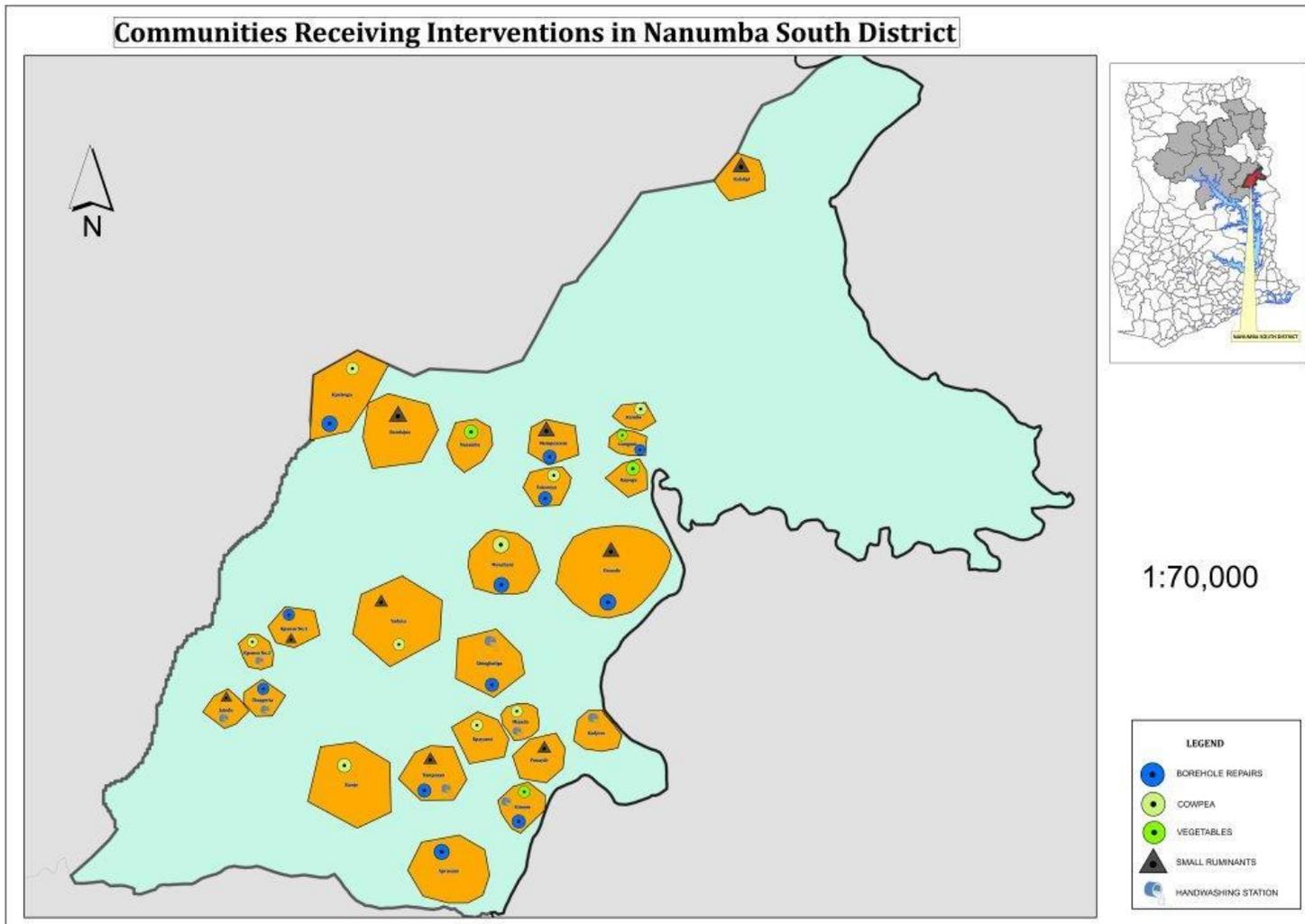


Figure 5 - Sample Community Intervention Map

e. Lessons Learned

Across all components planning and frequent follow up on progress is a deterrent of success. In both agricultural and WASH projects plan development did not incorporate sufficient contingency time and efficient delegation of responsibilities. Next quarter RING staff will conduct more timely and frequent field visits to district assemblies. The 2016 AWP development meeting will take place even earlier than 2015's November planning which should to allow districts to have more time at the end of the year to complete activities.

As evident in Component 1 results, early adopters of training were the most successful, slow or incomplete utilization of training led to variable results. Therefore it is important for ongoing training integrated with routine community monitoring.

Community acceptance and implementation of activities is more successful when planned around community schedules. Rushing to complete workplan activities leads to variable results as community members may not be willing to participate during peak labor season. Future workplans will incorporate more community input during initial phases.

As part of routine monitoring RING MSAs visited the borehole sites In Nanumba South and noticed that in one community, Gbangbliga, there was not an active Watsan committee and the community had locked up the borehole out of fear of running out of water. Further discussions with district staff revealed that previous borehole did include the formation of the Watsan committee but had not included sufficient training. Moving forward districts including Saboba and Nanumba South have ensured adequate budget for Watsan committee training along with borehole repairs.

The decision to fully involve district field staff and implementing officers in planning and review sessions resulted in more engagement during these meetings and better actual planning. They were able to utilize real-world experiences. Additionally having implementing staff from the different districts yielded positive experiences by connecting people with similar responsibilities

b. Challenges and Constraints

This quarter highlighted the importance of having a dedicated staff member assigned to following up on scheduled capacity building trainings. It appears that district management does not always prioritize staff training. RING will coordinate with the NRCC to emphasize and ensure completion of capacity building activities, possibly arranging joint trainings.

Another challenge is that districts have not yet fully adopted sufficient lead time in financial document preparation. While the importance is understood, frequently when the actual signatures are required those with the proper authority are not available.

With the breadth and scope of activities in each district's workplan, effective monitoring and data collection by district staff can be limiting. RING will conduct timely M&E capacity building trainings, but prioritize joint supportive supervision visits with district staff. Additionally RING will work with districts and the NRCC to develop tools and processes to address inefficiencies in data collection processes focusing on utilization of data.

V. GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Administratively, Global Communities became operational, moving in to the permanent office premises and recruiting necessary staff. This includes the office setup, procurement of necessary supplies, IT equipment, and internet service. Additionally, Global Communities hired Bethany Davidson and Lauren Brooks as full time Global Communities employees, and extended short term letter of contract with Urban Institute to allow for continued program activities. Global Communities' headquarters-based Director of Operations, Glenn Moller, traveled to Accra and Tamale for project oversight and meetings with USAID. Finally, additional progress has been made on completing sub-contract with JSI and Associates for Component two activities.

VI. ACTIONS AND ITEMS PENDING RESOLUTION

There is no update to this section for this reporting period.

VII. PROJECTED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT PERIOD

Next period will see continued implementation of Tier One workplans and a major focus will be ensuring that the Tier Two districts become operations. All Tier Two start-up activities are targeted for completion by May. These activities include

- a. Community Selection – mid-February
- b. Bank Accounts Established – late-February
- c. Start-Up Funds deposited late-February/early-March
- d. Pre-Information – mid-March
- e. Community Sensitization – early-April
- f. Household Selection and Validation – late-April
- g. Begin AWP development in mid- to late-April
- h. Completed AWP review by mid-May and funds in district accounts by early June

PFM Reviews for outstanding Tier One districts will continue along with frequent follow up visits on the implementation of PFM Mitigation Plans with Central Gonja and Nanumba North.

VIII. ANNEXES

a. Success stories

A Little Extra Labor For An Even Bigger Return

Central Gonja experienced an unfortunate dry spell this growing season. In fact average yields for all farmers were did not even reach 00 kilograms/acre. Despite these challenges Abiba Abdul Ganiyu, a 40-year farmer in Yapei-Yipala experienced overwhelming success of harvesting eight bags (800kg) from her one acre soybean farm.

Just like other the 49 beneficiaries in her community, Abiba received improved soybean seeds, tractor ploughing service for her one acre plot. With RING support, MOFA provided Good Agronomic Practice (GAP) trainings to all the 50 RING beneficiaries in Yapei-Yipala. Even due to poor weather conditions and a later start to the planting season, Abiba attributes her success to persistence and applying her training diligently throughout the planting cycle -- *“I took very good care of my soya farm. I weeded the farm three times you can imagine.”* She also cites having additional help from her family members and her husband’s *kpariba* group and involved the entire household in harvesting her fields at the correct time. During the planting season Abiba tended to her fields but was unsure of how much she would get. *“[It was] after the entire process I realized that my total output was 8 bags”.*



Abiba showing off her harvest

The AEA in charge of the Yapei-Yipala operational area, Mr. Asor calls Abiba an “early adopter” who utilized all of her learning very quickly. She was well ahead of her peers in this respect, especially with weeding. By weeding her farm three times, she ensured the soy bean plants were not competing for soil resources. To date she has sold two bags out of her eight to meet her urgent economic needs. She is keeping the rest for better prices later in the year and for her own household consumption.

Community Health Volunteers – On Duty, Making a Difference



Family Who Received ENA messages as part of Referral to CHPS Facility

Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) have a challenging job; as members of the community they are part of the first line of defense in public health. In addition to their regular farm work, CHVs visit their community members before and after pregnancy, refer cases to CHPS compounds and more. Under the RING program, district health staff train CHVs on Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) messages critical to health.

Before receiving the ENA trainings the CHVs would perform their routine checks and referrals, but were not always able to connect cases to nutrition actions. Salfo Adam, Jokpa Karimo and Issac Al Hassan from Zanzugu, Dawuripe and Yipala,

respectively attended ENA trainings conducted by sub-district health staff and immediately incorporated their new learning into their life and work. As Mr. Adam explained, *“Before you can go out and teach people you have to practice these messages in your own home so people will listen when they see that you do them.”*

For these CHVs, ENAs are not just theory, but part of their daily life. When they are referring cases to the nearest health facility they are also able to deliver ENAs which relate to the observed illness.

Mr. Karimo referred the family in the photo to a CHPS compound to treat the child’s diarrhea. Because of the ENA training, he was also able to inform the parents about proper nutrition and hygiene practices that will help to prevent future cases. CHVs have been able to bring their ENA talking points to everyone they meet during house visits; emphasizing the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, disinfecting drinking water, and hand washing before preparing food and after going to the bathroom.



L to R: Mr. Al Hassan, Mr. Adam, and Mr. Karimo

We Are Now a Dignified Community

When you are a guest in someone's home it can be embarrassing to inform your host that you need to make use of his or her sanitation facilities – it can be even more embarrassing as the host if you do not have any facilities to offer. Abukari Zakaria of Gbalo community in Chereponi quips *'If you have a latrine you can comfortably host visitors because you simply point to the latrine when your visitor wants to go to toilet. If you want to visit the latrine now I can proudly lead you to my latrine.'* District staff from Chereponi triggered Gbalo to begin Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) in November of 2014. The residents quickly understood the benefits and what they needed to do change.



Typical Style of Latrine Constructed in CLTS Communities



Safura Zakaria Sharing Speaking of Her Encounter with the Snake

Residents recalled that in the past there was foul odor lingering in their village and animals walking through feces only to then track it back in to the house contaminating their food and living areas. The community complained about diarrhea and stomachaches, but now since people have started using latrines. Zakaria says these complaints have all but disappeared. Most everyone has incorporated hygiene to their routines, even on the farm community members wash their hands using ash.

Improved hygiene and health and not the only benefits, Safura Zakaria credits her new latrine with reducing her future risks. Before she had her latrine he practice was to defecate in the tall grass. *"I woke up one morning and felt to defecate so I rush[ed] to the bush," she starts. "In my haste I did not notice a snake was lying where I went. I was bitten [by the snake] spent GHC 600 at the Saboba hospital for treatment! These latrines don't cost up to GH 600 and we are now safe from snake bites."*

b. Press Coverage

There is no update to this section for this reporting period.