

Sustainable Livelihood for the Extreme Poor in Rural Ghana – The JSDF Productive Inclusion Pilot Scheme in the Upper East Region under GSOP



“Can you feel how much we are accomplishing here in the Goo community? The only way we can express this feeling at this very moment is through our instantly composed music of welcome. We are not professional singers but we can express our gratitude and sing our own way. The song we sing comes from the bottom of our hearts, and that is all that matters today. *‘We are grateful, we are grateful . . . we are extremely thankful for the JSDF support.’*”

These sentiments were expressed by a beneficiary in the Goo community under the Bongo District when a joint Government of Ghana (GoG) and World Bank team undertook a 3-day Technical/Safeguard Mission to JSDF Project communities within the Bongo, Nabdam, Kassena Nankana West, Builsa North and Builsa South Districts all in the Upper East Region.

The JSDF **Support Rural Income Generation for the Poorest Project** is a productive inclusion scheme that is being piloted under the Ghana Social Opportunities Project (GSOP) in 8 Districts within the Upper East Region. The intervention targets extreme poor persons from the Government Cash Transfer programme (LEAP) and Labour Intensive Public Works programme (LIPW) and provides these persons with Vocational Skills Training and Start-Up Grants backed with a mentorship regime that ensures that the livelihood activities embarked upon by beneficiaries’ are fully established.

The livelihood activities being supported under the scheme include; Basket and Hat Weaving, Shea butter Extraction, Dry season



Farming, Soap Making, Rice Parboiling, Malt Processing, Piggery, Guinea Fowl Rearing etc .



The excitement that greeted the delegation was spontaneous in each of the communities visited and that said it all, as both beneficiaries and community leaders were full of praise for the intervention.

In the words of a middle aged female beneficiary in the Gbedema community within the Builsa South District who has been assisted by the programme to commence a vocation in shea-butter processing, ‘the JSDF programme has lifted a selected number of us from our LIPW and LEAP status to that of skilled tradesmen and women. Anytime we look back, we know it is a privilege given to a few of us owing to the limited resources at the disposal of the managers of the scheme. This is why we fondly cherish the support given to us. Thanks to the JSDF initiative, we are now acknowledged as productive members of the community and are allowed to join the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) from which we are able to access short term

loans. The programme has indeed lifted us from our hitherto hopeless situation to that of respectable members of society. This is why we say we are very thankful”.



Throughout the visit, Mr. Franklin Gavu, a Safeguards Consultant with the World Bank re-echoed the need for beneficiaries to pay attention to safe and environmentally friendly ways of going about their operations. He particularly emphasized the use of appropriate protective clothing, preservation and protection of sources of raw material and efficient waste management as key to the sustenance of the various livelihood activities.

Other issues raised and discussed at length during the mission included: the need to deepen the hand-holding role of training service providers, possibility of providing minimum equipment support to various groups to enhance efficiency in production, savings, improved packaging and facilitating

markets for beneficiaries’ products.

To date, the scheme which commenced in January 2015 and has -year duration has enrolled 4,194 beneficiaries and is looking forward to expanding coverage to 6,500 persons in total.



As a programme that seeks to provide sustainable livelihoods to extreme poor households, the JSDF “***Support Rural Income Generation for the Poorest Project*** “ may just be that much awaited graduation scheme that would ensure sustainable poverty reduction for the extreme poor in Ghana.

Certainly, the intervention has injected a new sense of self-belief, dignity, inclusiveness and fulfillment amongst the beneficiaries, most of whom are women, and this was evident from the joy and excitement expressed at each of the communities visited as depicted in the adjoining image.