

EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE OF THE \_\_\_\_\_  
COMMUNITY OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT TO  
COMBAT LAND DEGRADATION AND SOIL  
INFERTILITY

*PROPOSAL PREPARED BY*

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A LOCAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION  
(NGO) BASED IN \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE UPPER EAST  
REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL**

**Project Title:** Empowering the people of the \_\_\_\_\_ community of the \_\_\_\_\_ district to combat land degradation and soil infertility.

### **Introduction**

Man's activities have led to environmental degradation in many parts of the world, especially in the developing countries. Ghana, as a developing country, is caught up in this phenomenon and the threat of desertification is becoming increasingly visible, especially in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

Various causes of environmental degradation have been identified, among which are the following:

1. Increasing population growth – With the country's average annual growth rate of 3%, the 2010 Population & Housing Census (PHC) has put the country's population at approximately 24million people. With increase in population, there is the need for more food; this means cultivating more lands in the midst of declining yields, leading to the degradation of many lands. This is particularly true in the case of the Upper East Region of Ghana.
2. Another cause of land degradation is poverty. People living in the rural areas are so poor that apart from taking to farming and other related jobs such as selling fuel-wood, charcoal and other products made out of the natural resources of the land, they have no other job opportunities. They normally use fire to clear the land(bush burning) as a means to reducing land preparation cost. All these activities bring pressure on the environment; but for the resilience of the vegetation, the damage to the environment would have assumed more alarming proportions. Environmental experts estimate that more than 75% of energy used in Ghana is fuel-wood. Five hundred thousand(500,000) metric tons of charcoal is used in Ghana annually.
3. Lack of education- Is another cause of environmental degradation. Both the literate and illiterate populace are ignorant about environmental degradation activities. Contractors, industrialists, farmers and other users of the natural resources do not manage them sustainably.

In the case of the Upper East Region, the major causes of land degradation are not different from those outlined above:

- High human and livestock population cause enormous pressure on the land, forcing it (the land) beyond its carrying capacity.
- Inappropriate farming practices that encourage soil erosion and its impoverishment.

- Removal of vegetative cover for fuel-wood and for charcoal.
- Uncontrolled bush burning
- Poverty and lack of education which cause the people to indulge in these activities.

However, potentials exist for halting or reversing land degradation. Although the importance of trees to the environment is widely recognized, nothing very serious has been done either by governments or non-government institutions to consciously address the land degradation issues in the country by the growing of trees and other land degradation interventions. Although government policy on addressing the land degradation problem is evidenced by the establishment of institutions like the Forestry Department, the Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) and other government institutions, not much has been done to encourage rural populations to adopt tree planting and other environmental protection practices in an attempt to address the land degradation problems confronting the country today.

### **Nature of the Problem**

#### **Location of Project**

The project will be located in the \_\_\_\_\_ community in the \_\_\_\_\_ District of the Upper East Region of Ghana. The \_\_\_\_\_ district is one of the newly created districts, having been carved out of the then \_\_\_\_\_ District. \_\_\_\_\_ is the capital of the district and is located approximately \_\_\_km South-East of \_\_\_\_\_, the Upper East regional capital.

#### **Climate**

Harsh climatic conditions prevail in the area. Like the rest of the Region, the area is limited to a single cropping season. Crop production is generally risky. The rainy season starts from May and ends in September/October, with maximum rainfall occurring in August. The area is thus characterized by a long dry season(usually about seven months). This has a negative effect on crop and livestock production, as most water bodies tend to dry up during this long dry spell.

Total rainfall ranges between 900mm and 1000mm in years of very good rainfall and 600mm – 800mm in years of moderate rainfall. This rainfall, however, is adequate to support both crop and livestock production, but it is very erratic and is marked by confusing fluctuations in arrival time, duration and intensity.

#### **Farming Systems**

Agriculture is the mainstay of the people and it is a mixed sedentary smallholder crop/livestock production system.

The staple crops grown in the area include Early Millet, Late Millet, Sorghum and Groundnuts. The Early millet is usually intercropped with the Late millet or sorghum, but groundnuts are usually grown as a sole crop.

Average size of farm holdings is about 0.4ha. Increase in population has led to land fragmentation and continuous cropping on the same piece of land over the years, resulting in soil degradation and loss of soil fertility through soil erosion.

Soil fertility has declined remarkably over the years. The soils are fragile and degraded as a result of human activities, including poor farming practices, overgrazing, bush burning and deforestation.

Yields of the staple crops grown are shown in the table below.

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Yield/acre(bags)</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Early Millet	1.0 – 1.5	Intercropped with Late millet or sorghum
Late Millet	1.5 – 2.0	Intercropped with Early millet or sorghum
Sorghum	2.0 – 3.0	Intercropped with Early or Late millet
Groundnuts	3.0 – 4.0	Cropped sole

Source: District Agricultural Office (Ministry of Food & Agriculture)

Yields of between 1 – 3 bags for the staple crops is barely sufficient to feed an average family size of 6 – 8 people for the year. Most households therefore usually run out of foodstuffs before the next harvest. The area, just like most parts of the region have been experiencing food shortages over the years and is therefore often described as a food-deficit area.

The period between June and July is normally the period of scarcity when most families can just about afford one meal a day. The people therefore resort to various coping strategies during this period. Some fall on their small ruminants (sheep & goats) which they sell to purchase grain from the markets to feed their families. Others engage in handicrafts such as weaving of straw hats and baskets, smocks, leather works (bags),etc. for sale to replenish their grain stocks.

The challenges listed are some of the most potent causes of food shortages, poverty and malnutrition confronting the people of the area over the years.

The need to reclaim or halt the continuous degradation of the land has been brought home to the people and they have indicated their willingness to do anything to restore their lands – hence the submission of this proposal to solicit financial assistance for this community to address this most felt need – land degradation and soil fertility problems.

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