



SEND GHANA

CITIZENS' Watch



4th Quarter Newsletter



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01



SEND GHANA HOSTS OXFAM TEAM FROM 5 CONTINENT

On December 8, 2024, staff from Oxfam offices across Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and North America visited SEND GHANA's headquarters in Accra to learn about the organization's operations, contributions to Ghana's development, and its work in the civil society space. The visit was part of an advocacy and leadership-sharing program, where the delegation engaged with partner organizations to exchange experiences and lessons on advocacy and leadership over the years.

The delegation included representatives

from countries such as Nigeria, Yemen, Mexico, Germany, Malawi, Uganda, Jordan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Ghana, Egypt, Canada, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Singapore, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom. The learning visit was part of a broader effort to enhance collaboration among Oxfam partners and its global offices, fostering a cross-regional exchange of strategies and best practices in civil society engagement and policy advocacy.



A group photo of the OXFAM delegation with SEND GHANA staff.

Ms Harriet N. Agyemang, the Country Director of SEND GHANA, welcomed the visitors and emphasized the importance of knowledge sharing. "As an organization, one of SEND Ghana's core values is learning for development. We are always happy to participate in anything that involves learning and sharing experiences," she said. She also outlined SEND Ghana's structure, explaining that the organization operates three offices in Ghana: the headquarters in Accra, and regional offices in Tamale and Takoradi. During her remarks, Ms Agyemang provided an overview of SEND GHANA's advocacy work over the years. She gave a brief history of the organization, which began operations 26 years ago in Northern Ghana, specifically in Tamale. She explained, that as part of its early operations, SEND GHANA provided support to vulnerable populations during the height of the conflict in Northern Ghana. The organization focused on improving livelihoods, particularly for smallholder farmers who lacked access to sufficient protein sources. "We also developed programs centered on women and youth, offering business and organizational skills, along with education on reproductive health and HIV prevention," she noted.

Despite initial resistance to supporting women due to entrenched patriarchal systems, SEND GHANA successfully introduced credit unions for women, which later expanded to include men. "Today, the Tamale Credit Union is one of the largest in the region," Madam Harriet shared.

SENDGHANA's work has evolved to include

governance advocacy. Notably, in 2000, the organization played a pivotal role in holding the government accountable for the proper use of the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) funds. Through strategic civil society mobilization, SEND monitored the use of these funds to ensure transparency and accountability in government expenditure.

Gender equity remains a cornerstone of SEND's work. Madam Harriet highlighted the Gender Model Families (GMF) program, an initiative designed to address the unequal distribution of unpaid care work within households. GMF encourages families to share domestic responsibilities, enabling women to participate more actively in economic activities and decision-making.

In addition to sharing SEND GHANA's institutional journey, Ms Agyemang also reflected on her personal leadership trajectory within the organization. She recounted how she rose through the ranks, starting as a Communications Officer before advancing to Programs Officer, then Senior Program Officer, and ultimately assuming the position of Country Director. As a long-serving staff member, she emphasized that her growth in the organization was not only a result of dedication but also of building a strong professional network and continuously empowering herself through learning and leadership development. Her story served as an inspiring testament to the opportunities for growth within civil society organizations and the importance of self-empowerment in achieving career milestones.



A cross-section the delegates listening to Madam Harriet give her remarks.

The meeting ended with the representatives from Oxfam offices around the world sharing their insights on their respective countries' challenges and successes. The learning visit concluded with a renewed commitment to collaboration and knowledge exchange, as participants left with a deeper understanding of SEND Ghana's work and its vital role in Ghana's development

02



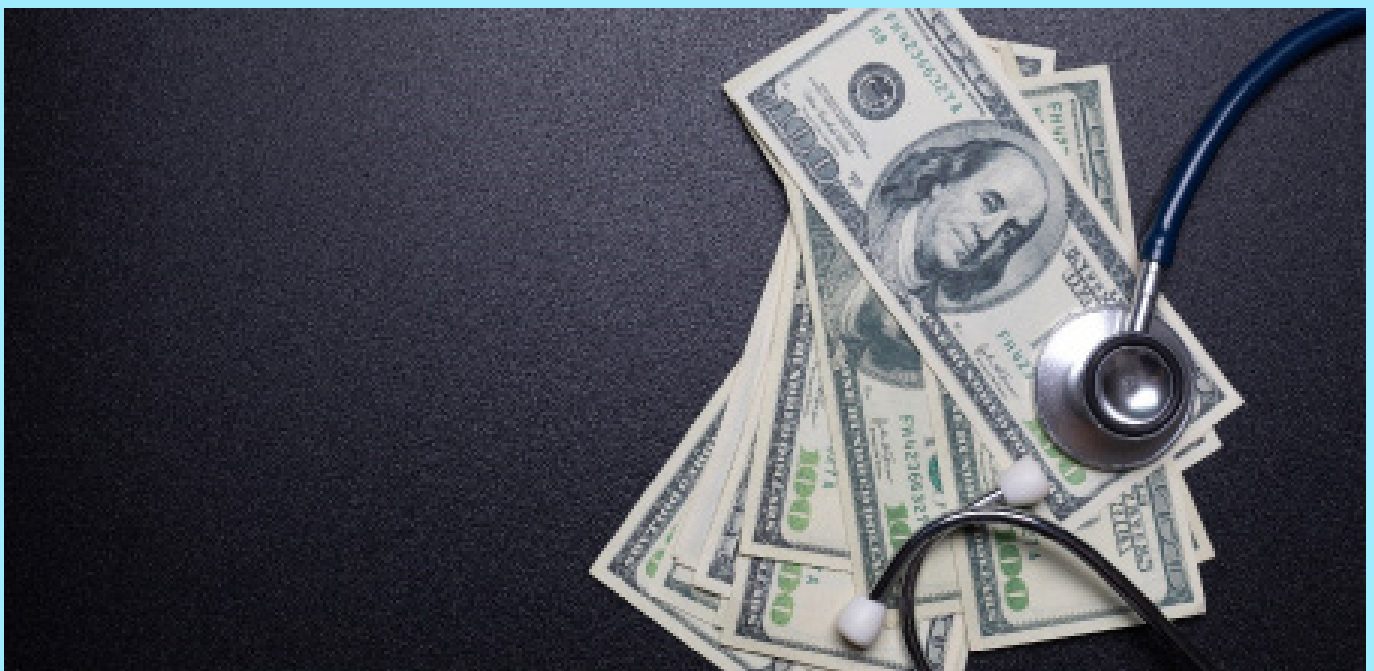
FROM CRISIS TO PREPAREDNESS: FORGING GHANA'S BLUEPRINT FOR RESILIENT HEALTH SECURITY

By Joana Ankomaa Addey

The recent cholera outbreak in Ghana, which claimed 40 lives and placed immense pressure on our healthcare system, has exposed the stark vulnerabilities in our public health infrastructure. Health centres in affected communities were overwhelmed, struggling to provide care with limited resources. The tragic loss of life during this crisis should be a wake-up call for the country. While cholera and other diseases like COVID-19, Mpox, and Marburg have tested Ghana's resilience, the ongoing lack of a reliable funding mechanism for

public health emergencies hinders our ability to respond well to outbreaks.

Our health system's inability to respond swiftly and adequately to these crises is often a failure of resources and preparedness. As we saw with cholera, health centres were unprepared with workers faced with overwhelming challenges. It is reported one facility had to shut down its OPD services as a result of the high number of cholera cases they were dealing with at that time. The absence of dedicated and sustainable funding left communities vulnerable, with



no reliable way to address the scale of the outbreak and prevent its devastating spread. This gap in our response capacity underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive solution.

As long as humans interact with their environment, disease outbreaks will continue to be a recurring challenge. Therefore, it is necessary to establish robust structures at both local and national level to combat them effectively. These structures require significant financial investment—funds that must be strategically accumulated over time to ensure sustained preparedness and response. This is where President John Dramani Mahama's leadership and his administration's commitment to strengthening Ghana's public health system come into play.

In his inaugural address on January 7, 2024, President Mahama pointed out the importance of fortifying the country's health system to withstand future health emergencies. He emphasized that the unpredictable nature of disease outbreaks means we must be prepared—not just reactively, but proactively—to safeguard the lives of Ghanaians and our neighbours. As he aptly stated, the focus must be on minimizing the loss of life when the next epidemic inevitably arrives.

Ghana's Health Security Plan, which is currently waiting to be laid in parliament, offers the new government a blueprint for putting funding and preparedness measures in place. If passed, this plan will pave the way for the creation of a

Public Health Emergency Fund (PHEF), a dedicated financial mechanism that will ensure Ghana has the resources it needs to respond quickly to health crises. This fund will be critical in financing essential services such as medical supplies, isolation centres, healthcare worker training, and surveillance systems.

The Health Security Plan represents a unique opportunity for Ghana to break free from its dependence on unpredictable donor funding. This plan is not just a policy proposal—it is a lifeline for the nation, one that can ensure Ghana is better prepared, better funded, and ultimately, better able to save lives in times of crisis.

It is now time for action. The new Minister for Health, Dr Mintah Akandoh, has an important role to play in ensuring that this plan moves from proposal to reality. Dr Akandoh must work closely with civil society organizations, such as SEND GHANA, to build the political will and public support needed to pass the Health Security Plan in Parliament. This is a critical step in ensuring that Ghana is not only prepared for future health crises but is also able to prevent them from spiralling out of control.

Dr. Akandoh's leadership, combined with the support of civil society, will be crucial in driving this agenda forward. By prioritizing the passage of the Health Security Plan and ensuring it includes a fully funded Public Health Emergency Fund, Ghana can build a health system that is ready to protect all citizens, no matter where they live.

03



SEND GHANA AND PARTNERS HOLD WORKSHOP TO DRIVE ADVOCACY FOR FRONT-OF-PACK FOOD LABELLING POLICY

By Joana Ankomaa Addey

Currently, Ghana lacks robust front-of-pack warning labels on packaged foods. While Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) mandates food labeling under the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851), the existing guidelines are limited to ingredient lists for pre-packaged foods. They fall short of providing comprehensive information on the nutritional value or potential health risks associated with these products. This gap underscores the need for FOPL warnings that inform consumers about nutrients of concern, such as high levels of fat, sugar, or salt.

In view of this, SEND GHANA, Vision for Alternative Development (VALD), and the Ghana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (GAND) are implementing a new project advocating for mandatory front-of-pack food labeling (FOPL) warnings in Ghana. This 15-month project aims to ensure that by September 2025, consumers can easily identify foods high in nutrients of concern—such as fat, sugar, and salt—through clear and evidence-based labeling. The partners held a three-

day workshop in Accra from October 28 to October 30, 2024, to develop an advocacy and communication strategy for the project.

The project's overarching goal is to advocate for the implementation of mandatory FOPL using an evidence-based Nutrition Profile Model. This model will enable consumers to quickly identify foods that are high in fat, sugar, or salt—nutrients linked to obesity, hypertension, and other health concerns. The workshop opened with a goodwill message from Adeolu, the Regional Senior Advisor for the FPP Advocacy Fund in Africa at the Global Health Advocacy Incubator. He then shared key advocacy strategies that the partners could adopt for the campaign, such as building evidence-based arguments, engaging policymakers and stakeholders, and leveraging public support to strengthen advocacy efforts and secure government buy-in. Drawing on global best practices, he highlighted examples from countries such as Chile and Mexico, which have successfully implemented FOPL policies.



An effective communication strategy tailored to the project's advocacy goals was developed. It covered stakeholder mapping, creating targeted messaging, and identifying key audiences. Dr. Archibald Adams, who facilitated the session, highlighted the importance of aligning messages with the priorities of various stakeholders, including policymakers, food manufacturers, and consumers, to ensure the campaign achieves its objectives.

The partners mapped out project stakeholders, categorizing them into beneficiaries, adversaries, allies, and government stakeholders. This exercise helped refine the consortium's understanding of the stakeholder landscape and informed the development of targeted advocacy strategies.



From left to right: Mr. Siapha Kamara (CEO of SEND West Africa), Prof. Kingsley Preko (President of GAND) in the center, and Madam Harriet N. Agyemang (Country Director of SEND Ghana) next to Prof. Preko, pictured alongside participants.

To advocate for this critical policy shift, the project will research to generate evidence to support the advocacy messages. This includes legal and stakeholder mapping to identify political opportunities and determine the most effective advocacy strategy and policy pathway. A key focus will be improving the food environment in schools, where children are particularly vulnerable to unhealthy diets. Collaborating with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health, the FDA, the Ghana Standards Authority, and the Ghana Health Service to develop policies that make such labeling a requirement for all pre-packaged foods is crucial for the success of the project. When implemented, the FOPL policy will serve as a powerful tool for public health advocacy.

04



TRAINING OF TRAINERS WORKSHOP STRENGTHENS FARMER-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Francis Nkaw

For many years, cocoa farmers in Ghana have been the backbone of the country's position as a leading global cocoa producer. Despite their critical role, many lack awareness of policies, market trends, and sustainable practices that impact their livelihoods. To address this, a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop was organized to educate farmer cooperatives, Cocoa Health

and Extension Department (CHED) officers, and agriculture-focused media practitioners on cocoa traceability, European Due Diligence Regulations (EUDR), cocoa marketing systems, child labour, human rights, African Regional Standards, the Cocoa Farmer Pension Scheme, and sustainable farming practices.



The Training of Trainers approach is a strategic model that ensures knowledge transfer beyond the immediate participants. By equipping selected farmers with relevant information, they, in turn, disseminate this knowledge to a larger network of people.

Without awareness of these key policies, cocoa farmers face significant risks, including market exclusion due to non-compliance with international regulations like the EUDR. They may also struggle with unfair pricing, lack of access to pension benefits, and continued exposure to exploitative labor conditions. Furthermore, failure to adopt sustainable farming practices can lead to environmental degradation and reduced crop yields, ultimately affecting their livelihoods.

As part of the workshop, various presentations were made by industry experts to deepen participants' understanding of key policies affecting cocoa farmers. One such presentation focused on the Cocoa Farmer Pension Scheme, delivered by Mrs. Letricia Yankey, founder of Cocoa Mmaa and a farmers' representative on the Cocoa Pension Scheme Board. Mrs. Yankey provided valuable insights into the scheme, explaining

that it is a structured savings plan designed to ensure financial stability and support for farmers during their retirement once fully implemented. Emphasizing the importance of early enrollment, she stated, "Farmers must secure their future today by enrolling in the Cocoa Pension Scheme. This is a step towards ensuring they have the financial stability they deserve in their retirement years." She also urged participants to raise awareness among fellow farmers about the benefits of the scheme, reinforcing the need for collective action to secure a sustainable future for cocoa farmers.

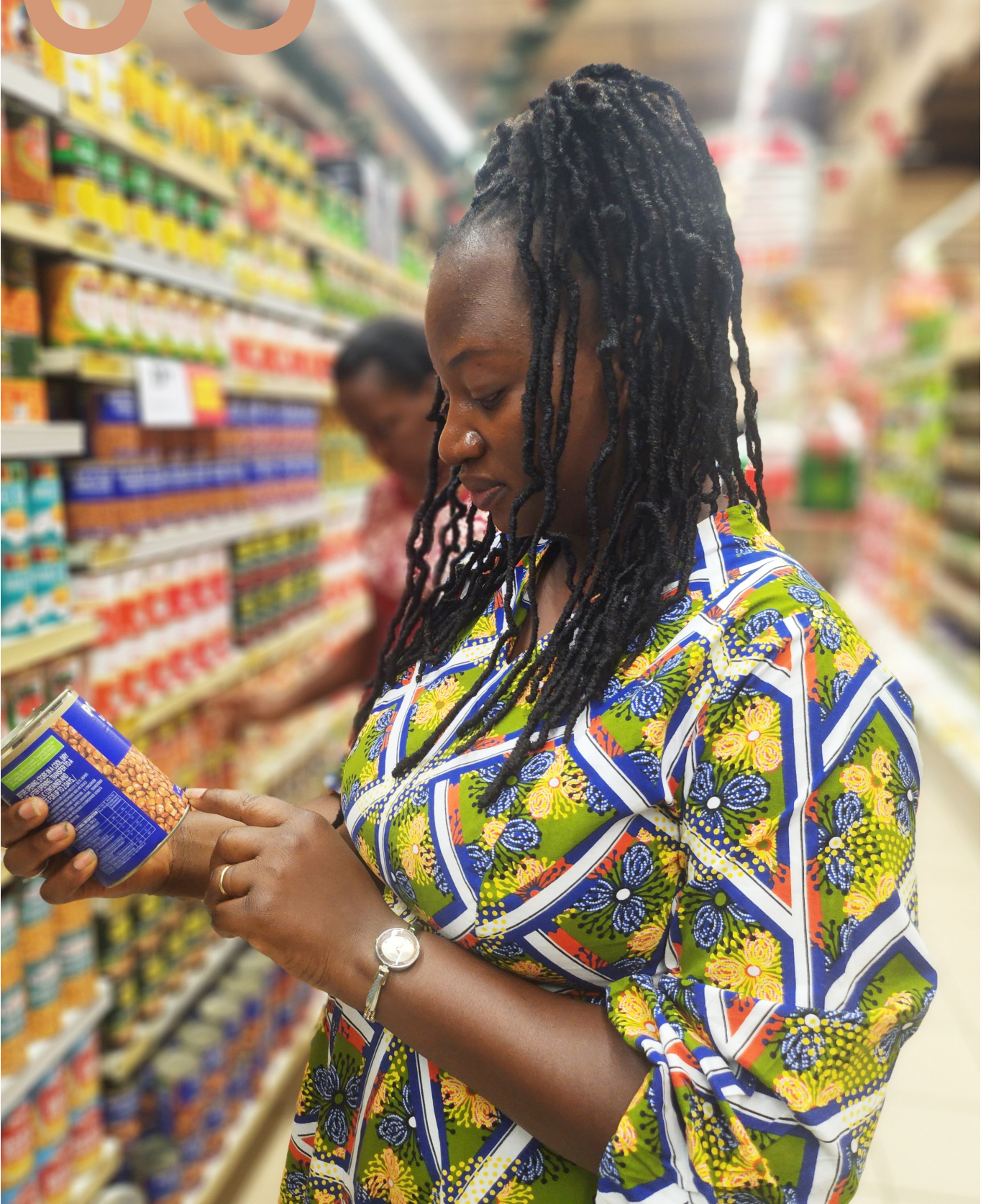
Another focal area of the workshop was cocoa pricing and its impact on farmers' income. Building on the discussion of key policies, participants explored how pricing structures influence their livelihoods. Mr. Obed Addai, founder of ECO-CARE, simplified the complexities of the global cocoa market, explaining the various factors that drive price fluctuations. He introduced participants to digital tools that provide real-time updates on cocoa prices, enabling farmers to make well-informed decisions about when to sell their produce for maximum profit.



When farmers understand cocoa pricing and market dynamics, they can strategically time their sales to maximize earnings. Access to accurate market information empowers them to negotiate better prices, reduce financial vulnerability, and enhance their overall economic stability.

By providing cocoa farmers with this essential knowledge, the training laid the groundwork for a more sustainable, fair, and well-informed cocoa sector in Ghana. This knowledge transfer will lead to improved practices, enhanced market access, and better financial security for farmers, ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of the cocoa industry.

05



FDA TO INTRODUCE FRONT-OF-PACKAGE WARNING LABELS TO PROMOTE HEALTHIER EATING

Story by: Levlyn Konadu Asiedu and Francis Nkaw

Mr. Desmond Hackman, Senior Regulatory Officer at the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), has announced the government's efforts to implement the Front-of-Package Labelling (FOPL) policy at a special session during the 2024 Africa Nutrition Conference in Cape Coast. He told participants that the Ministry of Health, along with other stakeholders, is working to launch the policy, which aims to empower consumers to make healthier food

choices and reduce the burden of diet-related diseases.

The introduction of mandatory front-of-package warning labels is a crucial step in addressing Ghana's growing public health challenges. With non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity on the rise, clear and visible labels will help consumers quickly identify unhealthy food products and make better dietary decisions.



3rd from the left, Prof. Kingsley Asare Preako, alongside Levly Konadu Asiedu (Project Coordinator, FOPWL), with participants at the 2024 Africa Nutrition Conference in Cape Coast.

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Experts at the event stressed that this policy will not only empower consumers but also encourage food manufacturers to reformulate products by reducing excessive sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats. Ultimately, FOPL will contribute to a healthier population, lower healthcare costs, and boost economic productivity.



A cross section of speakers at the 2024 Africa Nutrition Conference in Cape Coast

Ms. Pearl Selormey, a Clinical and Public Health Nutritionist, emphasized the serious health risks associated with highly processed foods. She urged Ghanaians to be mindful of their diets and welcomed the policy as a necessary step toward improving public health.

Prof. Kingsley Asare Preko, former President of the Ghana Academy of Nutritionists and Dietetics, explained that Ghana is dealing with a “triple burden of malnutrition”—undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity. He stressed that mandatory warning labels would help curb NCDs and improve the country’s overall nutrition.

Adding an international perspective, Ms. Celine Awour, CEO of the International Institute for Legislative Affairs in Kenya, shared Kenya’s experience with food labeling. She highlighted the importance of consumer awareness, strong regulatory frameworks, and continuous advocacy to ensure the successful implementation of

the policy. She advised Ghana to learn from Kenya’s challenges, particularly in dealing with resistance from the food industry.

A team of experts from the Global Health Advocacy Incubator also provided insights into global best practices on FOPL, cautioning against interference from industry players who may seek to delay or weaken the policy. They emphasized the need for strong government leadership to prioritize public health over business interests.

The session, attended by over 300 students, academics, health professionals, and government representatives, concluded with a strong call for the government to fast-track the implementation of mandatory front-of-package labelling. Participants stressed that without clear regulations, unhealthy food consumption will continue to rise, worsening the NCD crisis.

06



CHIEFS AND COCOA FARMERS UNITE TO END ILLEGAL MINING IN NYAME Y3 ADOM

Illegal mining activities in the Nyame Y3 Adom community have come to an end thanks to the efforts of local chiefs, bringing much-needed relief to the community, particularly the cocoa farmers who work along water bodies. For a long time, illegal mining posed a significant challenge in the Nyame Y3 Adom community in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

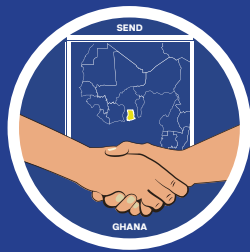
The community had been struggling with a rise in galamsey activities that impacted around 50 cocoa farms covering over 62 acres of land. These Operations not only damaged the farmlands but also polluted the River Pra and its tributaries, the main water source for the area, worsening the already difficult conditions for farmers.



In June 2024, SEND GHANA organized a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Human Rights forum at Twifo Praso under the Fair for All project to raise awareness among civil society organizations, cocoa companies, and community activists about rights abuses. FPIC is a principle protected by international human rights standards, stating that communities must give their consent before any project affects their lands, territories, or resources. It ensures that all people have the right to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.

During the forum, the chiefs were made aware of the severe human rights abuses and environmental degradation caused by galamsey activities in Nyame Y3 Adom. They were informed about how illegal mining is negatively impacting cocoa productivity in the area. The farmer used the forum to inform the chiefs of their predicament and called on the two influential chiefs from the Twifo Hemang Lower Denkyira area, Nana Kofi Amoasi (Dwantoa Hene) and Asiema Akwaboah (Tufo Hene), to use their influence to end the illegal mining activities.

Moved by the plight of the farmers and the deteriorating state of the environment, the chiefs pledged to take immediate action to address the issue and restore peace and stability to the community. The chiefs took swift action, collaborating with state security agencies to secure areas around the riverbanks where illegal miners operated. By September 2024, all illegal mining activities in the Nyame Y3 Adom community had been halted. This decisive intervention not only restored peace and stability to the community but also allowed cocoa farmers to resume their agricultural activities without the constant threat of environmental destruction. The cessation of galamsey activities has had a profoundly positive impact on the community. Water bodies are gradually recovering, and the threat of losing more cocoa farmlands to illegal mining has ceased, helping to stabilize cocoa production in the area



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