



CITIZENS' WATCH

No. 2601/SEPTEMBER, 2026

PAGE - 09

No More Unhealthy Foods:
Students Join Campaign for
Front-of-Pack Warning Labels

PAGE - 12

Ghana's Budget
Transparency, Declines - 2025
Open Budget Survey

PAGE - 15

Preparing To Save Lives
SEND GHANA And Partners To
Continue Push
For Domestic Funding For



New COCOBOD Bill: 10 THINGS COCOA FARMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS SHOULD KNOW

By: Joana Addey

Ghana's cocoa sector is entering a new phase following the passage of the new COCOBOD Bill on 31 July 2026. The legislation introduces changes to how the cocoa sector is financed, managed and supported, while also strengthening protections for farmers, cocoa farms and children. Cont'd. pg2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

New Cocobod Bill: 10 Things Cocoa Farmers
And Stakeholders Should Know

Page 2

02

Community Leaders Champion
Shared Responsibility For Unpaid
Care Work

Page 5

03

No More Unhealthy Foods: Students Join Campaign For
Front-of-Pack Warning Labels

Page 9

04

Ghana's Budget Transparency
Declines - 2025 Open Budget Survey

Page 12

05

Preparing To Save Lives
SEND GHANA And Partners To Continue Push
For Domestic Funding For Epidemic Preparedness

Page 15

New COCOBOD Bill: 10 Things Cocoa Farmers and Stakeholders Should Know

Cont'd. from the cover page.



Here are 10 key things cocoa farmers and stakeholders should know.

1. COCOBOD will be under the Ministry of Finance

A major change is the shift of COCOBOD from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to the Ministry of Finance. The move is intended to strengthen financial oversight and improve the management of COCOBOD's finances.

2. Farmers will receive 70% of the FOB price

For farmers, one of the most important provisions is the requirement that they receive 70% of the gross Free on Board (FOB) price of cocoa. This establishes a clearer share of the value of cocoa for farmers and is intended to provide greater protection for their income.

3. COCOBOD's old debts will be restructured

Years of accumulated debt have placed pressure on COCOBOD's finances. Under the new framework, these legacy debts will be ring-fenced and restructured to help put the Board on a more sustainable financial footing.

4. Scholarships For Children of cocoa farmers

Young people from cocoa-farming families are also set to benefit from educational support. Priority will be given to courses that can contribute to the development of the cocoa sector, including agriculture, agribusiness, biotechnology and environmental sustainability.

5. Farmers will have a pension scheme

After years of contributing to Ghana's cocoa industry, farmers will have access to a dedicated pension scheme. This is expected to provide greater social protection and financial security when farmers can no longer work.

6. Cocoa farms will have stronger protection from illegal mining

Illegal mining remains a major threat to cocoa farms and farmers' livelihoods. To address this, the new framework provides stronger protection for cocoa-growing areas, including a 500-metre protection zone around cocoa farms to restrict mining activities. Effective enforcement, however, will be critical to ensuring these protections work in practice.

7. Unauthorised destruction of cocoa trees will attract tougher penalties

Cocoa trees will also receive stronger legal protection. Anyone who unlawfully cuts down or destroys cocoa trees could face fines of up to GH¢60,000, recognising the years of investment and income that can be lost when mature trees are destroyed.

8. Cocoa smuggling will face tougher penalties

Another major change concerns the illegal movement of cocoa across Ghana's borders. Smuggling will attract significantly tougher penalties, including fines of up to 200,000 penalty units, reported at about GH¢2.4 million, as well as as possible imprisonment.

9. At least 50% of cocoa must be processed locally

Ghana is also taking another step towards retaining more value from its cocoa. From the 2026/27 cocoa season, at least 50% of cocoa beans are to be processed locally, with the aim of creating jobs and strengthening Ghana's cocoa-processing industry.

10. Children will have stronger protection

Protecting children in cocoa-growing communities is another important part of the reforms. The provisions strengthen labour protections and safeguard children from hazardous work, supporting Ghana's wider efforts to eliminate child labour and protect children's right to education and a safe childhood.

What does this mean for cocoa farmers?

Taken together, these changes could have a significant impact on cocoa farmers and the wider sector. The 70% FOB share, pension scheme, scholarships, protection from illegal mining, tougher penalties for cocoa tree destruction and smuggling, stronger child protection and the local-processing target are among the key areas to watch.

However, passing the legislation is only the first step. Its success will depend largely on how effectively it is implemented.

Farmers and their organisations will need clear information about what the

new provisions mean for them, while civil society and other stakeholders have an important role to play in monitoring implementation.

Ultimately, the success of the reforms should be measured by whether they improve farmers' incomes and welfare, protect their farms and make cocoa farming a more sustainable livelihood for future generations.

COMMUNITY LEADERS CHAMPION SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR UNPAID CARE WORK

To reduce time poverty on women and adolescent girls

By: Jamilatu Zakaria

Through the United for Care-Sensitive Approaches to Rights and Empowerment (UCARE) initiative, SEND GHANA and its partners are making significant strides in getting community leaders and their people to recognize the effects of unpaid care work on women and adolescent girls and actively support measures to promote the equitable distribution of unpaid care work at the household and community level.



Abdulai Iddrisu, Sub-Chief of Zangballung community in Kumbungu district responding to UCW advocacy issues during the GMF Community Experience Sharing meeting

Since 2024, SEND GHANA and its partners have been implementing the UCARE initiative to advance gender equality by addressing the unequal demands of unpaid care and domestic work carried by women and adolescent girls.



During and after photos of a community clean up exercise in Alipe community, Central Gonja

Many women and adolescent girls, especially in farming households and rural communities, spend hours each day performing domestic responsibilities ranging from childcare to house chores. This contributes to the time poverty experienced by women and girls, thereby limiting their ability to participate in economic activities and engage in decision-making processes.

Time Poverty refers to the reduced ability to make unconstrained choices about time allocation because of long working hours, whether work is paid or unpaid. In Ghana and globally, women do more unpaid care and domestic work than men and are more likely to experience time poverty (IFPRI).

Through the application of the Gender Model Family (GMF) approach, which encourages shared responsibilities between men and women within households, the UCARE initiative is promoting gender responsive norms, policies, and practices that recognise, reduce, respond to and redistribute unpaid care responsibilities.

The project has conducted sensitisations on unpaid care work across 450 communities in 10 districts of northern Ghana, reaching over 50,000 people, including chiefs, imams, youth leaders, and other community members.

Through the sensitisation campaigns, community leaders have gotten to understand why unpaid care work should be a shared responsibility between men and women and many of them have committed to helping address issues of unpaid work in their communities.

In districts such as Mamprugu Moagduri, Central Gonja, and Mion, some leaders have moved beyond verbal endorsements to registering their households as Gender Model Families (GMFs) and are publicly modelling equitable care practices, thus establishing new social norms and increasing community acceptance of shared household roles.

“I joined the (GMF) programme so that my people will learn from me. I have four wives, and I actively participate in household responsibilities now. I use my motorbike to fetch water and firewood, take care of the children when my wives are attending to other domestic work, and assist each wife with cooking on their designated cooking days. These changes have led to a more peaceful household, improved cooperation among my co-wives, and reduced conflicts, which previously occurred every three days.” — **Chief of Sakpaba, Mamprugu Moagduri District.**



SEND monitoring team with the Chief of Sakpaba

In the first half of 2026, SEND GHANA and its partners conducted community experience sharing meetings in 95 communities, bringing together over 3,300 gender model families and community leaders and influencers to reflect and agree on what more they can do to reduce the demands of unpaid care work on women and adolescent girls.

Commitments were made introducing sanctions to discourage norms that prevent men and boys from participating in unpaid care work and mobilising community members to contribute financially to infrastructure improvements like boreholes, to reduce women's domestic burden.

With such interest and commitments from community leaders, the UCARE initiative is on course to advancing gender equality by reducing the time poverty experienced by women and girls.

No More Unhealthy Foods: Students Join Campaign for Front-of-Pack Warning Labels

By: Mohammed Nurudeen Salifu

University students and academic staff across Ghana are adding their voices to calls for clearer food warning labels to help curb diet-related non-communicable diseases. From June to July, SEND GHANA took its advocacy campaign for Front-of-Package Warning Labelling (FoPWL) to selected tertiary institutions across the country, training and mobilising hundreds of young people to endorse the policy and take greater control of their food choices.



Students of UHAS endorsing the Campaign during their Nutrition Week

Working closely with the Ghana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (GAND), the team visited Tamale Technical University (TTU), Sandema College of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Sciences, Kintampo College of Health and Wellbeing, University of Education, Winneba (UEW), University of Health and Allied Sciences, (UHAS) in Ho, and Kintaps University College of Health and Allied Sciences in Accra.

The engagements targeted students studying nutrition and related courses, equipping them with knowledge on FOPWL and deepening their understanding of the link between diet and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). The training also built the capacity of the students to use advocacy and communication strategies to influence policymakers and raise awareness among their peers about the urgent need for front-of-pack warning labels.

NCDs Are on the Rise

Facilitators highlighted the growing incidence of NCDs, such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke, cancers and kidney diseases, which is accounting for nearly 45% of all deaths in Ghana.

“Rising NCDs are linked to dietary shifts. Traditional foods are being replaced by processed and ultra-processed foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats,” Dr Celestine Mensah of Kintaps University noted.

She said poor diets contribute to obesity, hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and premature deaths, placing heavy social and economic costs on

families and the nation. According to Dr Abdul-Malik Bawah of TTU, students are particularly vulnerable because of busy schedules, limited finances and exposure to aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods.

FoPWL Is a Proven Solution

Front-of-Package Warning Labelling was presented as a proven public health tool that can help reduce diet-related NCDs by encouraging healthier food choices.

“FOPWL is a simple, visible and easy-to-understand label placed on packaged foods to warn consumers of excess amounts of sugar, salt or fats in those foods,” Levlyn Konadu Asiedu of SEND GHANA explained.

Citing evidence from countries such as Chile, Mexico and Israel, she said food warning labels reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods by helping consumers make quick and informed choices at the point of purchase.

Young People Can Make a Difference

Facilitators underscored the important role young people can play in raising public awareness and influencing policymakers through student-led initiatives such as peer-to-peer education, campus campaigns, community outreach and social media activism.

“Students can promote healthier diets by avoiding unhealthy foods themselves, encouraging their friends to make healthy choices and writing articles and social media posts demanding for the FOPWL policy,” Joana Addey of SEND GHANA noted.



Madam Levlyn Konadu Aseidu, Project Lead making a presentation to the Nutrition students on the need for FoPWL in Ghana

The Time to Act Is Now

Alarmed by the amounts of sugar, salt and fat in the foods they consume and the risks of developing NCDs, students and academic staff saw the need to act. One after another, they signed to endorse the FOPWL campaign, adding their voices to calls for government to accelerate the formulation and adoption of the policy.

“I have seen what noncommunicable diseases are doing to our parents, our relatives. As a mother, I don’t want my daughter to grow up facing these same challenges. That is why I am appealing to the government to speed up with the food warning labels, so that it will help create the awareness to our parents, to our relatives, so that we can watch the food we eat and help to stop non communicable diseases,” Agnes Binak, level 100 student, Tamale Technical University.

At the UEW, the Dean of the Faculty of Health, Allied Sciences and Home

Economics Education, Prof Fred Yao Gbagbo announced an immediate ban on the serving of unhealthy foods during faculty activities. “Going forward, only healthy Ghanaian foods should be served during our programmes,” he said, explaining that this was necessary to safeguard the health of both students and staff.

At UHAS, students extended the campaign to the streets of Ho. They visited bus stops and markets, engaging members of the public on the dangers of ultra-processed foods and the need for FoPWL. They also engaged with the Municipal Chief Executive and organized media discussions on FoPWL.

The campaign for FoPWL is certainly gaining momentum and in the coming months, SEND GHANA and its partners will continue to visit schools, engage the media and mobilise public support for the FOPWL policy.

Ghana's Budget Transparency Declines - 2025 Open Budget Survey

By: Patrick Akpaligah

Ghana's score fell from 46% in 2023 to 22%, well below Sub-Saharan Africa's average of 38. This undermines citizens and civil society's ability to engage with and hold the government accountable for its spending decisions.



Ghana, however, made marginal gains in terms of public participation in the budget process and oversight of the budget by key state institutions. The country's score for public participation increased slightly from 17% in 2023 to 22% in 2025, while it obtained a score of 33% for budget oversight, as against 28% in 2023.

The 2025 Open Budget Survey was conducted through independent expert assessments, peer reviews, and standardized scoring, covering 82 countries, making it the world's only independent, comparative, fact-based instrument for assessing budget openness.

For Ghana, the report highlights a delay in publishing the Executive's Budget Proposal and Citizens' Budget online, and the inconsistent release of the In-Year Reports. While there were public consultations and audit-related engagements, the opportunities for public participation remain limited as citizens and civil society groups are largely excluded from budget hearings and monitoring.

The report also shows that audit oversight, though improving, is still constrained because Ghana lacks an independent fiscal institution to provide nonpartisan fiscal analysis, and Parliamentary oversight also remains weak.

It's Not About the Score – It's About Trust

At the dissemination of the report in Accra, Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, Hon. Abena Osei-Asare emphasized that improving fiscal transparency is not about chasing rankings, but about building public trust and delivering real outcomes for citizens.



She stressed that while Ghana's low transparency score is concerning, the real value of the OBS lies in the critical questions it raises about how public resources are managed and communicated.

The MP stressed that transparency without understanding is ineffective. Simply publishing data is not enough—there must be deliberate efforts to simplify complex fiscal information and communicate it in ways that citizens can engage with and use to hold institutions accountable, she noted.

Many Citizens Still in the Dark

A key concern raised was the growing disconnect between government efforts and public perception. Despite ongoing reforms and engagement activities, many citizens still feel uninformed about how public funds are used. This gap is further widened by the rapid spread of misinformation, particularly on social media, which can distort facts and undermine trust in public institutions.

Another critical issue highlighted was the need for stronger coordination and alignment between national systems and international standards. While Ghana has a Public Financial Management framework, delays and inconsistencies in reporting timelines and formats can negatively affect assessments, even when legal requirements are being met.

Better Budgets, Better Outcomes

The discussions succeeded in reframing the narrative around the OBS findings. The goal, ultimately, is not to improve scores alone, but to ensure that public financial management leads to better service and stronger accountability, to improve lives for citizens.

Preparing To Save Lives

Send Ghana And Partners To Continue Push For Domestic Funding For Public Health Security

By: Mohammed Nurudeen Salifu

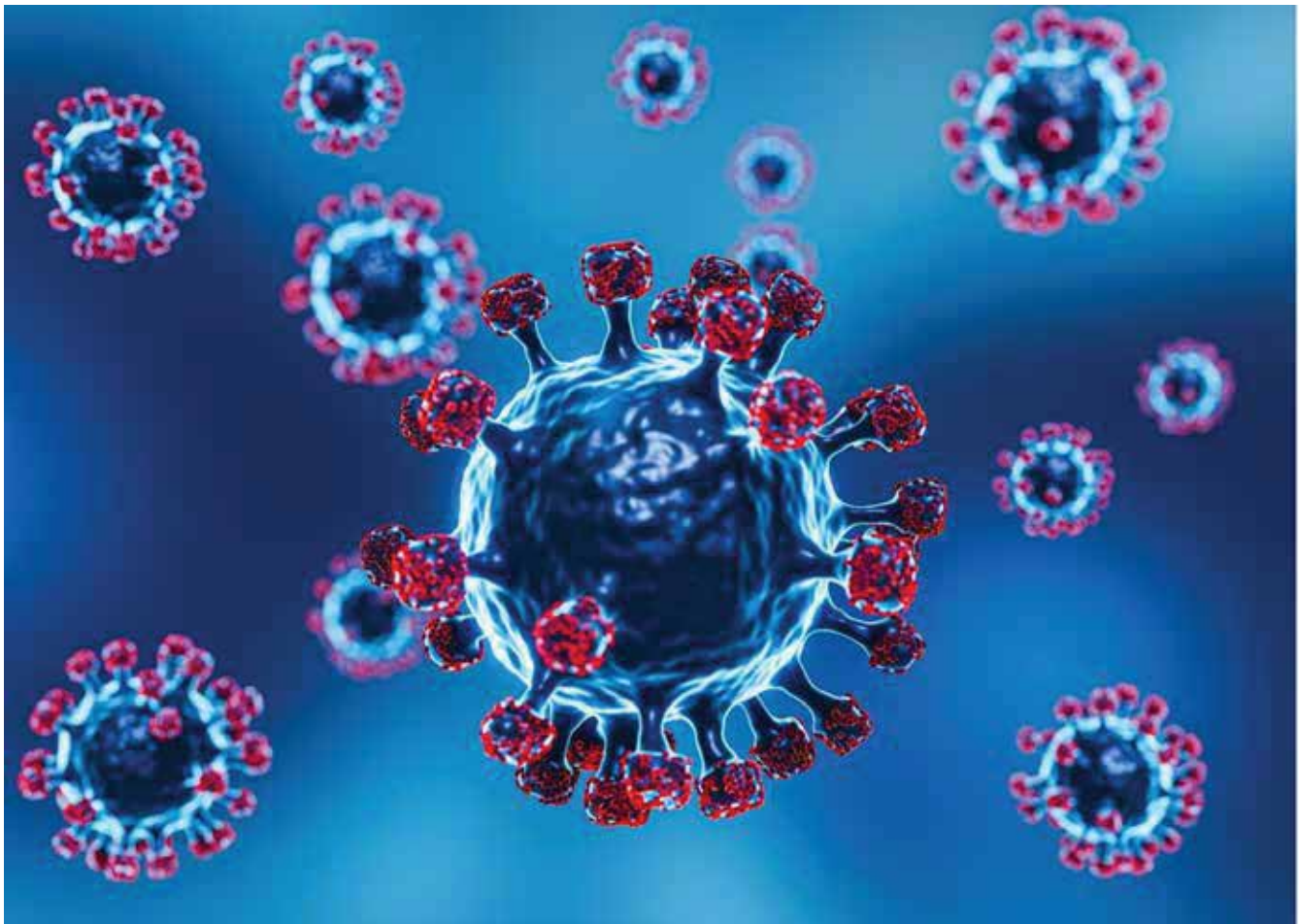
It was in 2020 when SEND GHANA started its advocacy to increase domestic funding for epidemic preparedness in Ghana with support from Resolve to Save Lives (RTSL) and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAi). While significant successes have been chalked in the last six years, SEND GHANA and its partners remain focused on getting the country to establish an emergency health fund.



A 2017 Joint External Evaluation that assessed Ghana's readiness to prevent, detect and respond to epidemics revealed glaring gaps. Despite recurring outbreaks of cholera, meningitis, yellow fever, and polio, there was no dedicated funding for epidemic preparedness. Although local governments in Ghana were meant to have epidemic preparedness plans and funding sources in place, they did not. The COVID

19 pandemic further exposed weaknesses in infrastructure, staffing, and protective equipment.

Against this backdrop, RTSL, GHAI and SEND GHANA launched an advocacy campaign in September 2020 to increase central government commitment and funding for the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS). The campaign also focused on engaging local governments to increase financing for epidemic preparedness building momentum.



Religious leaders, traditional rulers, youth advocates and CSOs were trained as epidemic preparedness champions and mobilised to disseminate messages about the need for increased funding for epidemic preparedness. There were regular engagements with policy makers, members of parliament, and civil society on the impacts of epidemics and the importance of epidemic preparedness funding. Regional budget forums were conducted to gather citizens' input on budget priorities for epidemic preparedness. These inputs were collated and provided to the Ministry of Finance to inform its budget development processes. The team also partnered with the National Centre for Early Warning and Response Mechanism, under the Office

of the President, to engage key decision-makers on allocating resources for emergency preparedness.

In addition, the media and the public were extensively engaged through press conferences, press releases, interviews on radio and TV, documentaries, and social media. Journalism fellowships and awards were instituted through which journalists were trained on epidemic preparedness reporting and recognized for impactful reporting.

Local and National Impact

Through this extensive advocacy campaign, SEND GHANA and its partners have successfully contributed to increased attention to and prioritisation of emergency preparedness at both district and national levels. Some metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies—e.g., Tema, Ketu, Birim South, Adaklu and Afigya Kwabre—are now including epidemic preparedness and response in their annual budgets.

The NDPC included epidemic preparedness response and funding priorities in the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework for 2022–2025. The Ministry of Finance increased the health budget in response to SEND GHANA's submissions and went further to partner with SEND GHANA to develop a proposal for the establishment of a public health emergency fund. The establishment of this emergency fund, which would repurpose a successful COVID-19 levy, advanced to the highest levels of government and seemed on track for adoption until it was slowed due to the transition in government.

Moving forward

RTSL is now supporting SEND GHANA, in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service, to strengthen Ghana's epidemic preparedness and response systems through the 7-1-7 framework. The initiative is being implemented through two mutually reinforcing approaches. First, SEND GHANA will conduct a situational analysis of Ghana's public health emergency preparedness and response system to assess the country's readiness to integrate the 7-1-7 framework into existing public health regulatory structures. The evidence generated will guide policy dialogues, promote accountability, and strengthen commitments to address identified gaps. Second, SEND GHANA will raise public awareness, amplify evidence-based advocacy messages, and build public and institutional support for stronger epidemic preparedness and response systems.



**SEND
GHANA**

Contact us:

**A28 Regimanuel Estate, Nungua
Barrier, Sakumono
Accra, Ghana**

0302 716 830 / 0302 716 860

Find us online:

 www.sendwestafrica.org

 info@sendwestafrica.org

 [@sendghanaofficial](https://www.facebook.com/sendghanaofficial)

 [@send_ghana](https://twitter.com/send_ghana)

 [@sendghana](https://www.youtube.com/sendghana)

 [@sendghana](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sendghana)