

**COVID-19 ROOD SECURITY RESPONSE PROJECT
(ACCESS)
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
PERIOD: JULY - AUGUST 2020**



Project Title	Project Number	Start	End
ACCESS Project	D002841/P001416	2020-07-01	2021-03-31
GAC Branch	GAC Officer	CCA Department	CDF Contact
Bilateral Program	Alan Stewart	International Development	Benoit André Executive Director
Total Program Budget	Overall GAC Contribution	Project Expenses To Date	Annual expenses
\$1,000,000.00	NA	NA	NA

1.0 Introduction

The COVID-19 food security (ACCESS) project is a 9-months (June 2020 – February 2021) emergency response project funded by the Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and is implemented in Ethiopia and Ghana. The project focuses on supporting smallholder farmers households to overcome the disruptions in the food security systems, value chains including the markets systems amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The ultimate goal of the COVID-19 food security response project is to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on smallholder farmers who have been particularly affected by food system disruptions. The strong local partnerships that CDF has established with government agencies and the private sector has facilitated the start-up and the continuous implementation of the ACCESS Project. This COVID-19 food security response will benefit over 12,000 direct beneficiaries (58% women) and 26,000 indirect beneficiaries. It will be implemented in fiscal year 2020-21. The project made good stride in Ghana distributing seeds, fertilizer and tractor services for women and disabled beneficiaries. In Ethiopia, due to stringent government approval requirement, the project must be presented to the regional government for approval. The government welcomes the project and appreciated for its timely intervention to address the effect of COVID-19. Hence, the process took sometimes for the project to kick start. This narrative report covering for the period from July to August 2020 is mainly highlighting the progress made in Ghana. Financial report will be submitted separately as it require sometimes consolidating field expense.

The immediate outcomes of the project are as follows:

- Increased access by female and male smallholder farmers to agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizer) purchased and distributed by farmers' cooperatives to produce nutritious foods.
- Improved gender equitable access to markets for female and male smallholder farmers by investing in post-harvest and storage structures, establishing market linkages, and other marketing support.
- Increased and gender equitable access for female and male smallholder farmers, and landless and disabled persons, to inputs, assets, and other supplies for farms as well as home and community gardens through the establishment of a COVID-19 voucher-based grant facility.

Project location

In Ethiopia, the ACCESS Project is being implemented in Hagare Mariam District. While in Ghana the project is being implemented mainly in 20 communities Wa West and 4 communities in Kpandia District. The main reason for focusing on these districts high level of vulnerable to food insecurity. More specifically, the Wa West district in Ghana has the highest proportion (42%) of households with severely or moderately food insecurity (GLSS 7). The district is also characterized by high households' size of 7 as compared to the national average of 5 (Vulnerability Assessment, 2015). This suggests that vulnerability to food insecurity is already high. Hence, the ripple effect of the COVID-19 has the high chances of aggravating the food insecurity of the households in the districts.

2.0 Achievements

2.1 Project Inception Activities

2.1.1 Stakeholder Engagements

The project implementation team held Stakeholder engagement meetings with Government departments including the departments of Agriculture, the district Assemblies, the departments of Cooperatives, the Health Directorates, the department of social welfare. and traditional authorities. The purpose of these engagements was to confirm the disruptions COVID-19 has brought upon small holder farmers and to communicate the response of the Canadian Government towards these negative impacts. These engagements also offered the team the opportunity to sort for the support of these agencies in the implementation of the ACCESS Project. Both the government agencies and the traditional authorities pledged their support for the smooth implementation of the initiative.



2.1.2 Recruitment of Project Staff

Though a competitive process, field team were recruited to implement the ACCESS project. The staff were given the needed orientation about the ACCESS project and the critical roles they have to play to ensure the success of the project. They were also equipped with the needed logistics and resources to execute their duties.

2.1.3 Signed MOU with the Government Departments

Both in Ethiopia and Ghana, the project signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the regional government departments including the departments of Agriculture and departments of Cooperative for the support in sustaining the impacts of the ACCESS project. The MoU gives highlights on the roles the departments are expected to play to sustain the impacts of the ACCESS project.

2.1.4 Assessments

Assessments were conducted to identify the needs of the co-operatives and the groups in the two countries. The assessments aimed at identifying the extent to which the COVID-19 has affected farming activities in the project area. The result of the assessments revealed that, household's food consumption has increased due to the closure of schools. Again, the restrictions on movements and social distancing halted bulk buyers for farm produce and increase in high price of available food items. The result also showed slowdown in general business including petty trading, and limited access to planting and agro-inputs. Smallholder farmers in the area cultivated less acreage of farmlands as compared to the previous years due to the impacts of the restrictions on movements and social distancing as well as difficulties in accessing production inputs. Co-operatives and farmer groups expressed their willingness to partner with the project to provide the necessary support for smallholder farmers and vulnerable households.



Beneficiary selection criteria, registration forms including vulnerability selection criteria was developed for the selection of beneficiaries for the ACCESS project. Field staff were all familiar with the criteria for selecting beneficiaries especially the vulnerable group.

2.2 Output 1: smallholder farmers mobilized through cooperatives and farmer groups

The project made significant progress through mobilizing co-operatives and groups in the project area for the project. In Ghana, 1,955 smallholder farmer households from groups in 20 communities were mobilized for the project. About 83% of the registered smallholder farmers are women while 17% are men as indicated in Table 1 below. The project team explained the project purpose to beneficiaries and encouraged them to take the COVID-19 safety protocols seriously to keep them safe from the virus.



ACCESS project field staff leading a sensitization session at Ga

In Ethiopia, the project mobilized 7,744 (815 Female) and 2,294 (1,561 male) smallholder farmers from eight multipurpose cooperatives and twelve rural credit and saving cooperatives for the support package. The apex co-operative (Woreda Co-operative) expressed their willingness to support the smallholder farmers, landlessness, and disabled persons with the necessary

agriculture inputs.

Table 1: Smallholder farmer households Registered (Ghana)

Zone	Female	Male	Total
Dorimon	505	110	615
Nyoli	569	80	649
Wechau	546	145	691
Total	1620	335	1955

2.3 Output 2: Agricultural inputs procured and distributed smallholders farmer households

2.3.1 Identification of service and input suppliers

An opened call for prospective agro-inputs dealers or service providers was done in Ghana to assess and select input dealers or service providers who have solid experience and the capacity to deliver the required inputs/services with speed and efficiency. A total of six (6) bids were received and after rigorous process of assessment, Q7 Link enterprise and Jeconza Enterprise were selected to respectively supply 30% and 70% of the total consignment. The process was done in strict compliance with GAC procurement procedures and was very transparent giving each potential bidder an equal chance of been selected. In Ethiopia, arrangement is being made to start the process for the procurement of inputs through the Cooperatives.

2.3.2 Established a Voucher (Coupon)Systems

The voucher/ coupon system was used in the delivery of inputs and services to beneficiaries. Three different types of coupons were designed by the team for efficient management and supply of inputs and to ensure transparency. A blue coupon was used exclusively for tractor services, white for improved seeds whilst green was used for fertilizer distribution. Each coupon issued contained the name of the beneficiary, group, and community. The rest of the information included the type of service, allocation number, and signature of the field officer. Beneficiaries were advised to take good care of their coupons and later present them to the commissioned project service provider for their inputs or services upon verification. A total of 5060 coupons were issued to farmers. Bellow is the break down.



Table 1.1: Coupon Supply

Coupon Colour	Type of Inputs/Service	Number of beneficiaries		
		Female	Male	Total
Blue	Ploughing	1193	238	1431
White	Seed	1394	280	1674
Green	Fertilizer	1603	352	1955
Total Coupons Supplied		4190	870	5060

2.3.3 Inputs Distributed to beneficiaries

All the 1955 smallholder farmers used their coupons to access the specific inputs and services. Each farmer received 9kgs of maize seed, 75kgs (3 mini-bags) of NPK and 50 kgs (2 mini-bags) of Urea. Whiles some farmers accessed all the full package (ploughing, seed, and fertilizer), others accessed either one (Fertilizer) or two (seed and fertilizer). The table below shows the details.

**Table 1.2: Inputs Supply**

Type of Inputs/Services	Number of Beneficiaries		
	Female	Male	Total
Ploughing, Seed and Fertilizer	1193	238	1431
Seed and Fertilizer Only	202	41	243
Fertilizer (NPK and Urea) Only	230	51	281
Total	1626	329	1955

2.3.4 Beneficiaries equipped with knowledge on Good Agronomic Practices

Training in good agronomic practices (GAP) was organized to enhance the knowledge of the 1955 smallholder farmers on the application of GAP principles in the on-farm production of maize. Specific emphasis was made on main factors affecting crop yields, land preparation method, crop variety selection and mode of planting, weed control and fertilizer application. Also, the team demonstrated the row planting and spacing to the farmers.

2.3.5 Training of Trainers (ToT) on 4R Agronomic Best Management Practices

A Training of Trainers (ToT) was organized for ten (10) AEAs together with the project field team on the 4R principles of fertilizer application. The objective of the training is to enhance the knowledge of the AEAs and project teams on the 4R agronomic best management practices (BMP) for them to downstream



project field Staff demonstrating fertilizer application

the knowledge to the farmers. The team were taken through the socio-economic and environmental benefits of the 4R principles, the various types of fertilizers in the Ghanaian market and the nutrient composition. They were also trained on the 4R principles of fertilizer application (using the **Right Source** of nutrients, applied at the **Right Rate**, in the **Right Place**, and at the **Right Time**). A practical field demonstration session was held for hands-on application of the fertilizer application. After the ToT, the AEAs and the project staff conducted down-streaming training to 90 lead farmers. Through the support of the lead farmers, the beneficiaries employed these principles in the

application of fertilizers on their fields.

Field Monitoring

Field visits were made to observe how farmers have applied the knowledge introduced by the project. It



was observed that most of the farms were planted in rolls and germination was good (about 90%). The team advised the farmers to do refilling in areas with poor germination.

There was also evidence of basal fertilizer application on the fields and some farms were ready for the top dressing. Farmers were encouraged to control weeds on their farms and to report to their Agric

Extension Agents of any emergence of pests and diseases on their farms

Output 5: Increased access of vulnerable groups to inputs/services & technologies

In Ghana, the team identified 442 vulnerable households during the registration stage. Registered vulnerable households were made up of 364 females and 78 males as shown in the Table below. These vulnerable groups were the aged, disabled persons, people with chronic ailment, and large households. Three hundred and ninety-two (392) of the vulnerable households who showed willingness to cultivate additional acre farm were supported with the requisite inputs. Assessment will be conducted to identify the specific needs of the remaining 50 vulnerable households and provide them with the appropriate support.

Table 5.2 Type of Inputs Distributed to Vulnerable Households

Type of Service	Number of beneficiaries
Ploughing, seed & Fertilizer	270
Seed &Fertilizer	7
Fertilizer only	115
Special Support	50
Total	442

3 Challenges encountered

1. The restriction imposed by the governments in the various countries made it difficult for the project to communicate the project objectives to the relevant government department as expected, however, the team observed the protocols and the necessary measures to lessen the COVID-19 pandemic repercussions.
2. In Ghana, the prolonged delay in rainfall within the project area affected the seed germination and period for fertilizer application. Some farmers waited for close to a week for the rains to enable them to plant their maize and apply the fertilizer.
3. Stringent government requirement delays the startup process in Ethiopia. Eventually the government, appreciated the project for its responsive to address the effect of COVID in timely manner and committed to fully support its speedy implementation