

# Oxfam in Ghana

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## The situation

Though Ghana has made tremendous progress in development and poverty reduction in the last two decades – and even has a chance of meeting the Millennium Development Goals on income poverty reduction and hunger by 2015 – there is stark inequality, particularly between people in southern and northern Ghana, and between men and women. For example, more than 70% of people in the poor northern regions (compared to the national average of 28%) live on less than \$1 a day.

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more children are able  
to go to school

## Oxfam in Ghana

- Oxfam has worked in Ghana since 1986
- We aim to bring lasting solutions for quality access to water, poverty, hunger, and injustice in the extractive sector.
- We're focusing on bridging the gap between progress made in the north and south, sustainable agricultural livelihoods, free universal quality health care, and promoting accountable governance and transparency in natural resource revenue management



Rice farmers harvesting in Astuare

## Sustainable agricultural livelihoods

Three in five Ghanaians depend directly on agriculture for their livelihoods. Many trade and agricultural policies have been bad for food crop production and smallholder farmers. Insufficient investment in agriculture has fuelled an increase in migration, rural vulnerability and poverty. Nearly 5% of the population in Ghana is food insecure, with wide regional disparities. Climate change is bringing more erratic weather and more extremes of weather on local communities, making food crop farmers vulnerable in Ghana.

Oxfam is continuously working to influence policy makers and reducing food insecurity and vulnerability, especially in Northern Ghana where more than 25% of the population is food insecure. We work to ensure sustainable rural livelihoods, access to markets, the social protection of people working in agriculture, climate change adaptation, and equitable, universal access to healthcare by farmers. For the GROW campaign we produced a media publication on land grabs – a major threat to food security.

Over the next four years, with our vibrant partners and allies, we will promote women's access to land and monitor Government investments in smallholder agriculture. We'll also press governments and companies to reform unjust policies, to preserve scarce resources and to share them fairly – in favour of smallholder farmers and women.

We're also supporting farmers' platforms, and agricultural organisations from the three northern regions to increase their voices in bringing about more favourable policies and market chains for Shea pickers and producers. And we're supporting civil society organisations monitoring the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) initiative – a Government initiative aimed at addressing the development imbalance between the north and south of Ghana as well as within the north of Ghana.

We've integrated climate change adaptation into our work in Ghana. We want to build knowledge and understanding as well as the ability for poor communities and small-scale farmers to adapt in Northern Ghana.



Photo: Chris Young



Photo: Jane Hahn / Oxfam America

## The extractive sector

Ghana has a significant endowment of mineral resources, including gold, manganese, diamond, bauxite. Recently it also began commercial production of oil and gas. But in many of the mining areas in Ghana, community lands are taken over for operations and often degraded by pollution; the opinions of local communities are mostly overlooked when mineral claims or contracts are being negotiated; revenues received by both local and national governments are not managed in a transparent manner, and they don't even translate into much in the way of concrete local benefits for communities.

Many of the local communities are also living with the social and environmental costs of these extractive industry projects without enjoying the rather short-term benefits (such as jobs, health care and infrastructure). And human rights abuses in the sector continue to be a serious problem. Consequently, mining has not

fulfilled its poverty reduction role, and poverty reduction has not been adequately mainstreamed into its policies.

With support from partners, Oxfam is advocating directly with corporations and governments to ensure respect for the rights of the local communities where they undertake their extractive works – including the right to earn a living and to participate meaningfully in decisions about oil, gas and mining projects. We are also facilitating accountability and transparency in the management of the oil revenues and regulations in the nascent oil and gas sector.

## Health

People in rural settings, especially in northern Ghana, have lower levels of access to essential services such as health care. Many people rely on Traditional Birth Attendants – who are mostly untrained and have less capacity for maternal services. Not all pregnant women are aware of their access to free health care, and the package that comes with it. The introduction of a National Health Insurance Scheme has increased health care coverage – but it disproportionately benefits the rich, since access is based on formal employment status or payment of a registration fee, even though much funding of the scheme is from taxes. Health care services (which must be paid for in cash) are even more inaccessible to poorer people, who are disproportionately those in the north, further exacerbating inequalities.

Oxfam's Maternal Healthcare project – begun in 2010 – seeks to improve access to free and safe maternal healthcare in six extremely remote and deprived communities in the Upper East Region. Together with our partners, we're working to ensure poor communities have access to quality health care. With our support, the six rural communities have been educated about the free maternal health policy. We've also facilitated the creation and training of Community Health Committees and traditional birth attendance, to respond to the needs of pregnant women in deprived communities. We work with local partners to train Traditional Birth Attendants in identifying maternal complications and risks, provide mobile technology to them to connect expectant mothers to health personnel for prompt health services,

enhance collaboration between the birth attendants and health officials, and educate women about the Government's free maternal health policy.

With our local partners, we have launched a report on the effectiveness of the National Health Insurance Scheme, which, among other things, demonstrates that free health in Ghana is possible – and within the reach of the Government. We're facilitating campaigns and dialogue among stakeholders on measures to improve funding to enhance access to health care, especially by poor people (particularly women).



Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Paros