

**Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement and Improved
Governance in the COVID 19 Response in Ghana's
Upper West Region**

Submitted by SAVE-Ghana

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To Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)

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SUMMARY

This proposed program seeks to support citizen engagement in the implementation of COVID-19 related activities in Ghana with the aim of contributing to increased efficiency and effectiveness of the response to the pandemic. The program proposes a three-pronged approach: 1) supporting Ghana Health Services (GHS) to provide information on COVID-19 preventive measures, procurements and distribution of supplies; 2) citizen led monitoring of public expenditures on COVID-19, working with multiple stakeholders including media, community leaders, and service providers to unearth and broadcast poor governance practices, inefficiencies and waste in the implementation of COVID-19 response; and 3) engaging with authorities to provide feedback to improve implementation.

The program will be launched in the Sisaala East and West districts of the upper west region of Ghana in which border towns to Burkina Faso are located. SAVE-Ghana is an umbrella NGO, with headquarters in Tumu, a small regional town centrally located in Sisaala. Due to the deprived nature of the districts, information about resource allocation for a COVID-19 response is lacking among most people, but especially among citizen groups who are supposed to be the prime target groups. This lack of information serves as a breeding ground both for the virus and for government officials to abuse the system. The program will serve a population of over 160,000 citizens in the target districts over a six-month period. The program is designed for rapid scaling up. The launch will be accompanied by media events and a fundraising drive to extend it to other areas and activities in line with the objectives.

BACKGROUND

As of 12 March 2020, Ghana recorded its first two COVID-19 cases from travelers who came from Norway and Turkey. As of 12 April 2020, a total of 566 suspected cases had been tested positive for COVID-19 by Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (NMIMR) and Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research (KCCR). Over 35,000 contacts have yet to be traced and tested. In the Upper west region, 7 new cases had been recorded as of 12 April with many more suspected due to its proximity to Burkina Faso and regular undocumented border crossings, combined with the potential impact of a large number of returning migrant workers from large West African towns to their Sisaala communities of origin.

The Government of Ghana has mobilized an impressive array of resources, both financial and physical, to address the pandemic. For example, the World Bank is providing \$100 million as short, medium and long-term financial support to assist the country in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. This financing package includes \$35 million in emergency support to help prevent, detect, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through the Ghana Emergency Preparedness and Response Program (EPRP). The EPRP intends to help strengthen Ghana's National Laboratories by providing robust systems for the early detection of COVID-19 cases and providing real time disease surveillance and reporting systems of outbreaks. It is also intended to improve response systems by providing social

and financial support and free health services to COVID-19 patients and families who are isolated or quarantined. Finally, the program will focus on risk communications and community engagement for increased awareness and compliance with prevention measures engaging the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Information and other agencies.

While the World Bank-supported activities are being initiated, health facilities are complaining of a blatant lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and there is little education about the pandemic, especially in remote regions. The supply chain of PPEs and other funds received by the government are not transparent. Based on experience with other instances of health problems and recent disaster response and relief, there is a high risk of corruption in ramped up procurement and service delivery investments being funded by donors and government.

SAVE-Ghana's Stakeholder Engagement Strategy: "Collaboration and Building Consensus work better than Confrontation"

In Ghana, the legal and regulatory framework for dealing with instances of mismanagement and corruption in the public sector exists. Within this framework, SAVE-Ghana practices a careful strategy of multi-stakeholder discussions and consensus building, and making activities more transparent by informing all stakeholder groups of their rights and responsibilities and solving ambiguous situations in a process of collaboration and negotiation with the appropriate government actors and other stakeholders, rather than confrontation and upfront blaming of authorities. This approach, in line with PTF in its advisory services to CSO's around the world, has demonstrated to work well, and, concretely, has shown to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of SAVE-Ghana's activities over the past decades. As a consequence, SAVE-Ghana has a well-established and documented 12-year track-record that its interventions in improving governance of public service delivery in primary education, health care, and local tax collection, for instance, have led to: 1) Confidence from community leaders and government champions alike, leading to: 2) Increased mutual trust and collaboration between local communities and service providers, with the result of: 3) Significantly decreasing absenteeism of government personnel at their posts; 4) decreased number of instances of bribes being solicited by service providers in exchange for services; and overall: 5) increased transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in getting things done.

In light of the above, it is obvious that SAVE-Ghana and the CSO partners in its umbrella network would be a valuable addition to public services to demonstrate, document and disseminate to the appropriate authorities an example of competent and effective use of resources especially in a poor region, to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, questionable procurement may occur, in spite of SAVE-Ghana and its partners' diligence. In certain cases of dubious financial activity, apparent misuse or misappropriation of funds will be dealt with on a confidential basis. This may trigger requests for information, further investigation and reporting to Ghana's legal authorities in cases of blatant misuse of funds.

In view of this background, SAVE-Ghana is seeking seed funding of \$10,000 from PTF, to launch the proposed program for Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement and Improved Governance in the COVID-19 Response in Ghana's Upper West Region, with the overall aim of contributing to increased efficiency and effectiveness in the management of COVID-19 funds and resources. Soon after the launch SAVE-Ghana with the assistance of PTF will initiate a fundraising drive for expanding the program to other areas.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

Objectives:

The overall objective of the program is to help improve efficiency and effectiveness of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by facilitating constructive community engagement.

Specific Objectives

1. Track and gather data on the flow of PPE and other equipment, facilities and services intended to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the process, flag gaps and clearly irregular processes in the implementation of COVID-19 activities;
2. Prepare and disseminate easy to understand information materials on prevention, treatment and access procedures to community members via broadcast, telecommunications and social media;
3. Share periodic monitoring reports in easy-to-understand formats in multi-stakeholder meetings with relevant state agencies, civil society professionals and local community leaders, including teachers and students at all educational levels, and their larger communities. Facilitate discussions and citizen feedback in delivery of COVID-19 response mechanisms as well as suggestions to prevent future waste;
4. Make the monitoring reports, authorities' responses and target population responses public using multiple media channels at local, regional and national levels, (print media, TV, radio, social media) with a view to enhance accountability and invoke action for further investigation and possible legal action, if needed.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

1. (Limited) Procurement and presentation of PPEs to health authorities: Experience from SAVE-Ghana's involvement in previous social accountability projects revealed that acceptance is higher when direct interventions are introduced as an example.

SAVE-Ghana will provide PPEs to gain front line worker buy-in and ensure that the project does not provoke any backlash;

2. Hold questions and answers (Q&A) sessions via local, easily accessible communication media (local radio, cell phones, television, and others) outlining a) personal preventive measures for the COVID-19 virus, b) enumerating the intended beneficiaries of government relief programs (e.g. recent, unemployed returnees from large cities in West Africa, one-person-headed households, other vulnerable groups), and how to access public services related to the COVID-19 response;
3. Identification and training of representatives from each stakeholder group to track the flow of financial and material resources and provision of services in the target area. First, SAVE-Ghana will identify and train selected “champions” – those service providers with a genuine interest in maximizing the efficiency and good governance aspects within the government COVID-19 response team - who will be providing information on bottlenecks and their view on how these services could be optimized. Second, SAVE-Ghana will identify key leaders from local target communities and other groups who will be assigned to collect data on actual service delivery as experienced by community members. Each group will provide accurate information as observed in actual procedures. Multi-stakeholder meetings will be organized to discuss strengths and weaknesses, and how to improve the process, including a “Community Score Card”; an action plan with mutually agreed indicators of improvement.
4. Routine data tracking and collection: SAVE-Ghana will support health workers to monitor and routinely report on COVID-19 medical procurement, supplies and deliveries to Health centers: - The health workers will be provided with smartphones with sufficient airtime to monitor and provide information related to COVID-19 procurements and supplies to their respective Health centers. This information will be analyzed and compared with national purchases and disbursements in order to identify and flag potential discrepancies and leakages.
5. Data validation meetings: SAVE-Ghana will hold online data validation meetings to validate all information and suggestions for improvement collected from the “champions” and users of COVID-19 services in the target communities. These meetings serve as quality insurance of the data to ensure that all information is properly analyzed, verified, true and accepted by all parties.
6. Citizens, state and non-state professionals’ engagement and dissemination of real-life data: After the validation, SAVE-Ghana will engage the public through radio programs and publications. This will improve interaction between different stakeholder groups and encourage action by both state and non-state professionals to ensure that citizens put pressure on government to remedy inefficiencies.

7. Social media engagements for information dissemination and gathering feedback from a wide array of people and institutions at local, regional and national level in Ghana: SAVE-Ghana will use its social media in creating awareness and advocacy on health service delivery in Ghana. Social media influencers will be identified and supported to disseminate information related to COVID-19, to put duty bearers on pressure to act and make sure that vulnerable populations are proportionally included. Short videos and online banners will be produced and disseminated to citizens through social media.

Outputs

1. Information curriculum on COVID-19 response developed, field-tested, and disseminated (online, radio, TV, social media, etc.), adapted to populations with various literacy levels;
2. Two project inception meetings held virtually, by cell phone, to respect social distancing;
3. Four engagement meetings with anti-corruption agencies held, by cellphone or videoconference, to respect social distancing;
4. Memoranda of understanding signed, eliciting the commitment of MDAs;
5. Five SAVE-Ghana project staffs trained by virtual means (e-mail, cell phone) on the project strategy, methodologies and relevant laws and regulations;
6. Six monthly multi-stakeholder meetings held with “champions” in health care centers in the target region and with local leaders and representatives of community structures to discuss possible improvements in governance and delivery of COVID-19 response;
7. Quarterly data on implementation of COVID-19 response activities gathered and available for analysis and periodic reporting and for end-of project reporting;
8. Feedback and capacity building on efficient response to COVID-19 conducted, virtually to respect social distance, with Ghana’s outreach network of 18 local CSOs;
9. Citizens throughout the Upper West Region know where to ask information and report feedback – positive and negative – about COVID-19 response services;
10. The Upper West case study is documented in a final report and disseminated.

Outcomes

- Improved implementation effectiveness of government’s COVID-19 mitigation efforts by complementing government efforts for informing local population – including vulnerable groups such as returnees from jobs in the large West African cities - in Sisaala East and West districts about the details of preventing coronavirus, and on how to access government services in response to the coronavirus;
- Improved efficiency of COVID-19 response by investigations and improvements of gaps and inefficiencies, in delivery of equipment, supplies and services, waste or misuse as a follow-up of sharing periodic reports with the authorities for appropriate action

- Enhanced transparency and accountability in COVID-19 response through making project reports and/or petitions public in cooperation with media.

About SAVE-Ghana

SAVE-Ghana is a local Ghanaian NGO founded in 2004 and legally incorporated by the registrar general's department in 2008 with registration number G-24,859. The organization originally evolved as a Youth Action Club (YAC) led by a group of enthusiastic young high school leavers who shared a vision of fostering community development by marshaling the youth to initiate actions that will contribute to the overall development process of their communities particularly in the Sisaala West and East Districts. Due to the vision and ingenuity of its founding members, YAC was transformed from a community-based youth club to a vibrant and proactive local Ghanaian NGO operating in the Northern Region of Ghana with its head office in Upper West Region of Ghana. SAVE-Ghana works with rural and deprived communities in the Upper West Region with a focus on promoting the quality delivery of basic social services including education, health, women empowerment, sustainable livelihoods as well as safeguarding the rights of women and children in deprived communities.

SAVE-Ghana is fortunate to have received a capacity building and coaching from SNV, PTF, ADVANCE USAID Project and during its formative stage ranging from the development of its first Strategic plan to its board development. This support over the years has made SAVE-Ghana eligible to receive financial and technical support from many development partners who supported and are still currently supporting its work.

The vision of SAVE-Ghana is a free society where the dignity of all persons is realized. SAVE-Ghana's mission is to work with the vulnerable and poverty-stricken communities and families and to ensure that people everywhere have the right and opportunity to live a good life. With over 23 full-time and 9 part-time and 5 on-line volunteers, SAVE-Ghana Currently has interventions in all the eleven (11) districts of the Upper West Region; and five districts of the Upper East Region in the areas of education, agriculture and livelihood support. We have two (2) Toyota pick-up 4-wheel drive vehicles, 10 motorbikes, 8 flat screen computers, 10 laptop computers and other basic office equipment used in running the office.

BUDGET					
	QTY		Unit Cost (GHC)	Sub total (GHC)	Sub total (USD)
Procurement and presentation of PPEs	1	100	100	10,000.00	1,886.79
Fuel	1	2	400	800.00	150.94
Sub-Total:				5,800.00	2,037.74
Identification and training of confidential key informants (CKIs)					
Fuel for KCI	2	2	500	2,000.00	377
Phone recharge cards	2	2	200	800.00	151
Sub-Total:				2,800.00	528.30
Routine data tracking and collection					
Fuel	5	1	700	3,500	660
Internet data	5	6	200	6,000	1132
Allowance for data collectors	5	6	200	6,000	1132
PPEs for data collectors	5	6	100	3,000	566
lunch for project staff	5	4	200	4,000	755
Sub-Total:				22,500	4,245
Data validation meetings					
PPEs for data collectors	18	2	100	3,600	679
Fuel	4	2	70	560	106
Launch	18	2	80	2,880	543
Feeding	18	2	80	2,880	543
Allowance for participants	18	2	90		0
Sub-Total:				9,920	1,871
Information, Education and Communication materials					
Fuel for distribution	10	2	80	1,600	302
Printing of materials	10	1	200	2,000	377
PPEs for participants	1	40	100	4,000	755
Lunch for project staff	5	2	60	600	113
Sub-Total:				8,200	1,547
Strategic engagements with duty bearers					
Fuel	1	1	500	500	94
Feeding	4	1	200	800	150
Allowance	4	1	200	800	150
Venue	1	1	100	100	18
Refreshment	3	20	50	3000	566
Staff time	3	6	1000	18000	3,396
Sub-Total:				4,377	
Direct project cost:					14,607.55
SAVE-Ghana contribution:					4,607.55
Amount requested from PTF:					10,000.00
<i>Exchange Rate: 5.3 Ghc: \$1</i>					

