



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

**1 Social Public Expenditure Accountability (SPEFA) Project Activities in the Ga East Municipal Assembly**

**2 Modest Progress in Eradicating Poverty, Intensified Efforts Needed in Critical Areas**

**Special points of interest:**

- Social Public Expenditure Financial Accountability (SPEFA) project 2nd quarter activities done
- Focus on rural economic development to bring about desirable goals in the achievement of MDGs 1— Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

## **Social Public Expenditure Accountability (SPEFA) Project Activities in the Ga East Municipal Assembly**

The Government of Ghana in collaboration with the World Bank initiated a project titled “local Government capacity Support (LGCS)” for forty-six (46) Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies in Ghana. The Social Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (SPEFA) process is the third component of the Local Government Capacity Support Project . The African Development Programme, an implementing CSO under the consortium of CSOs under SNV organized its second quarters activities of creating a learning platform for citizens and participating in the town hall meeting.

The second quarter learning activity focused on the planning process of the Assembly. This gathering attracted traditional authorities, media persons, citizen groups, women’s organizations, community members among others.



*The MCE Mr Kwao- Sackey interacting with participants*



*Mr Tali giving a presentation at the Town Hall Meeting*

The Deputy Municipal Planning Officer took participants through the process of planning at the Assembly. This indeed was an eye opener and a learning curve for most participants. Most participants had little knowledge on the assembly’s process of planning and questioned how they came about with the draft Medium Term Plan. Others also asked the Assembly to name projects they have implemented that they consulted the citizens.

The SPEFA forum, through the learning platform, thus provides citizens with knowledge to further engage the Assembly. The knowledge shared

at the forum did not only equip the citizens but the assembly was also challenged to broaden the number of persons they engage in assessing needs of community members before the Medium Term Development Plans are drafted (MTDP) as well as rethink its mode of communication and information sharing to community members in order to reach a wider population.

The Town Hall Meeting which followed the learning platform brought to the fore the need to increase the mobilisation of rents and fees so as to raise enough money for finance of projects in the Municipal Assembly. Discussions ensuing showed that although the Assembly always comes out with lots of projects it is unable to actualize all those plans due to the unavailability of funds.



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*The African Development Programme is an NGO that has been in existence since 1993. In collaboration with national and international partners, it has been actively engaged in Social Protection Issues with core specialization in Education, Health, Social Development, Vulnerable and Excluded Group and the Physically Challenged in Society. Governance and Gender Issues are cross-cutting programme areas.*

**MODEST PROGRESS IN ERADICATING POVERTY, INTENSIFIED EFFORTS NEEDED IN CRITICAL AREAS**

In the first of series of publication and media advocacy on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the African Development Program has lauded efforts generally made in halving poverty and extreme hunger across the African continent.

Speaking on an Accra-based radio station Pink 96.9 FM in a one-and-half hour discussion in September 2014, Head of Programs at African Development Program, Charles Othniel Abbey called on African governments to take concrete steps in addressing the productive employment needs of female farmers and heads of household to enhance their productive capacities to cater for their families.

Touching on the rate of progress in halving poverty and extreme hunger, Mr. Abbey said although Poverty levels in Africa has declined faster since 2005 than over 1990–2005, a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA and others) 2013 report on “Assessing Progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals” highlight that the decline is not fast enough to reach the target by 2015. Most workers are employed in vulnerable jobs with low wages and low productivity. These vulnerable jobs lacked the necessary conditions for decent employment and expose such workers to job losses, wage reduction risks, health hazards, amongst others. He therefore called on African governments to demonstrate commitment to International Labor Organization resolution on decent work for all and the social protection floor concepts. These he said would ignite policy changes to create opportunities for vulnerable segments of the population, especially women and disabled workers to reach their full productive capacity.



Mr. Abbey further revealed that the rural nature of poverty in Africa required that African leaders take seriously rural and local economic development strategies for accelerating poverty reduction and halving of extreme poverty if current gains made in poverty reduction are to be sustained. This is because poverty is at least three times higher in rural areas than in urban— in such countries as Morocco, Egypt, Ghana, Zambia, Cameroon, Cape Verde and Rwanda. This is largely due to the deplorable state of rural infrastructure, rural livelihoods and youth employment, limited access to quality education and high child labor, which are all key drivers of rural poverty.

In concluding the discussions, Mr. Abbey on behalf of the African Development Program called on the media within African countries, especially the electronic media, to initiate public dialogue through their mediums to engender national discussions on the MDGs. This he said are essential matters for nations to evaluate whether they have made progress, retrogressed or marking-time in making development meaningful for its citizens. Such discussions would place serious developmental issues within the fray of media discourse as important steps towards supporting national governments efforts and holding public officials accountable to service delivery.

