



INITIATIVE ON
West and Central African
Food Systems Transformation



REACHING THE UNHEARD: MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIALOGUES TOWARDS RESILIENT LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN WEST AFRICA

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Dialogues facilitator:



Partners:



Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly, Ghana



Doma Local Government in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Summary

Multistakeholder dialogues are crucial in breaking down silos and bringing together diverse voices across landscapes. These dialogues ensure that everyone's needs are considered, leading to fairer and more inclusive outcomes. In the context of the CGIAR Initiative on Transforming AgriFood Systems West and Central Africa (TAFS-WCA), several MSDs were organized in targeted landscapes in Ghana and Nigeria to co-develop inclusive landscape management plans (ILMPs). The MSDs assessed the status and dynamics of natural resources and ecosystem services, validated the LSA findings, and aided knowledge-sharing, partnership-building, and community mobilization for sustainable and resilient landscapes. The approach to the MSDs in both countries was guided by a combination of collaborative and empowerment engagement methods like focus groups, partnership building, and community mobilization. The principles of a successful MSD include inclusiveness, transparency, respect, facilitation, and decision-making. All relevant stakeholders were invited to participate, regardless of their background or position. The MSDs in Ghana validated most of the LSA results, with new information on drivers of change, state, and dynamics of natural resource use in the target social-ecological landscape. Participants came with new information including disunity between farmers and miners, changes in family practices, increased postharvest losses, reduced food production, new diseases, illegal mining due to new technology, and the inappropriateness of Cinderella Trees for agroforestry. In the Doma-Rutu productive landscape, MSDs confirmed that dwindling water resources affect agricultural productivity, floods in rice fields around the Ohina River, and common livelihood activities among women contributing to forest degradation and stream siltation. The State government proposed Operation Green Nasarawa State, which networks with charcoal producers, firewood traders, tree loggers, and timber traders. By reflecting on the experiences, valuable lessons were learned that could improve future MSDs:

- The importance of long-term commitment: Building trust and achieving lasting results requires long-term commitment from all stakeholders.
- The need for flexibility: The process could have been more flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging needs before and during the MSDs.
- The value of continuous learning: Dialogue participants and facilitators/researchers could have been more open to learning from each other.

Finally, the process gave an opportunity within this mobilization effort to identify citizen scientists, especially in Ghana. The aim was to involve residents in gathering water quality and quantity data and engage them in the MSD. This approach highlights a creative and inclusive method to collect valuable information and reach back to the community for an inclusive landscape management plan.

1.0 Background

Diverse voices across landscapes (local communities, indigenous groups, etc.) often struggle to be heard when decisions are made in separate "silos." Multistakeholder dialogues act as bridges, breaking down these silos and bringing everyone together to build shared understanding and find solutions that benefit everyone. Decisions about landscapes historically have not always considered everyone's needs. These dialogues ensure everyone's voices are heard, leading to fairer and more inclusive outcomes and decisions reflecting the aspirations of those who depend on the landscape. Through multi-stakeholder collaborations in local landscape research and the promotion of inclusive consultations, stakeholders/actors can expand their shared understanding, learn from each other, and build common knowledge towards improved landscape planning and management.

Under the CGIAR Initiative on Transforming AgriFood Systems West and Central Africa (TAFS-WCA), several MSDs were organized in targeted landscapes in Ghana and Nigeria, aimed at co-developing inclusive landscape management plans (ILMPs). These included MSDs carried out during landscape situational analysis (LSA) and its validation. These were carried out in the Ahafo Ano Southwest District Assembly (AASWDA) of Ghana and Doma-Rutu in the Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The MSDs were an opportunity to: assess the status and dynamics of natural resources and ecosystem services; and validate the LSA findings, which formed the basis for ILMP co-development. The MSDs also aided knowledge-sharing, partnership-building, and community mobilization for sustainable and resilient landscapes. The approach to the MSDs in both landscapes was guided by a combination of collaborative and empowerment engagement methods like focus groups, partnership building and community mobilization. These methods are essential tools for promoting inclusive and participation in landscape management. They provide avenues for open dialogue, foster cooperation among diverse stakeholders, and empower communities to actively contribute to decision-making processes.

1.1 Initiative context

The West and Central African Food Systems Transformation (WCA-TFS/WP3), one of the CGIAR initiatives seek to address the increasing challenges confronting the agricultural food production environment. It consists of five work packages (WP 1 – 5). Work Package 3 (WP3) is

about **inclusive landscape management**. This is based on the premise that equal access to and proper use of land and water resources is a prerequisite to building a healthy, productive, and One Health-sensitive environment for resilient agri-food systems and livelihoods. WP3 will, therefore, combine participatory tools and citizen science to co-develop and implement inclusive landscapes owned by the communities that enable sustainable scaling of bundled land, water, aquaculture, and climate-smart agronomic and digital innovations. WP3 proposes to:

- i. co-establish the status and progress of landscape management for sustainable intensification.
- ii. design adaptive socio-ecological landscape management plans that are One Health sensitive and embedded in local and national governance systems;
- iii. develop a near real-time water resources decision support system (WRDSS) to strengthen landscape resilience planning and investment;
- iv. deploy context-specific integrated land, water, fish, crop, and agronomic innovations at scale; and
- v. deploy market-driven circular bio-economy innovations to reduce pressure on water and land resources while mainstreaming One-Health approaches in planned innovations.

There are many challenges facing the agricultural production systems across West and Central Africa. Co-developing inclusive landscape management plans brings about a holistic view of the production ecosystem with inclusive interaction of stakeholders in resources inventory, evaluating prevailing challenges, co-designing possible interventions, and implementing innovation bundles based on identified challenges.

2.0 Method

The MSD in Ghana started with engagements with the District Chief Executive (DCE), the District Coordinating Director (DCD) and department heads on the team's mission and the landscape situational analysis (LSA) report was also discussed and a copy given to the Assembly. Preliminary activities towards the MSD involved mobilizing logistics and participants from the Mmrobem, Barniekrom, Kunsu, and Mankranso communities. Even though letters of invitation were sent two weeks before the engagement, there was a need to follow up with community leaders as traditional courtesies demanded. The MSD was held on the 21st of March, 2023 and started with a presentation of the key findings of the LSA to all stakeholders, after which the dialogue ensued (Figure 1). The interactions captured issues, including driving forces behind the pressures that delineate the state

of and impacts within the Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly (AASWDA) social-ecological landscape (SEL). Discussions also centered around respondents' visions of the future, i.e., per the priority challenges that respondents identified, their future expectations and which pathways could lead them to those expectations. Forty participants from government/non-governmental organizations and local representatives from different segments of the communities attended the workshop on 21st March 2023 at the assembly hall of Mankransu Senior High School in the Ahafo Ano South West District. After the plenary, where introductions and discussion of the objectives of the dialogue, and presentations on the LSA, participants were then grouped into four by the community (i.e., Mmrobem, Barniekrom, Kunsu), with the fourth group consisting of representatives from (para)statal and non-governmental institutions. This broadened the range of stakeholder perspectives and generated robust responses on key issues. Accordingly, participants had the opportunity to give and receive feedback, which helped validate LSA findings. See Appendix A for a detailed outline of the MSD workshop in Ghana, which was replicated in Nigeria.



Figure 1: MSD workshop with local stakeholders in Ahafo Ano South West District, Ghana

In Nigeria (Figure 2), the MSD included thirty-six participants. Participants included government officials, local-based Non-Governmental Organizations, and various sections of community representatives from the Doma-Rutu landscape. Letters of invitation were sent out about two weeks before the meeting date to stakeholders of the landscape. The objectives and scope of the dialogue were presented, and the participants were endeared to openly discuss. Two presentations were made in the plenary: an aerial video of the landscape and a presentation of key findings of the landscape situational analysis. The second section of the meeting was a syndicate grouping of participants into three: (1) the community members of the landscape in youth and women groups;

(2) non-governmental organizations and commodity associations (innovative platforms) present, and (3) Government officials (Federal, State, and Local Government personnel/officials from the various ministries). Syndicate grouping and the adopted composition of groups were particularly employed, a popular method used in workshops, to promote collaboration, teamwork, and active engagement among participants. The idea was to foster a broad range of perspectives and ideas without losing commonalities and the feeling of inadequacy common among people of little means among “experts”. In these small groups, participants had the chance to give and receive feedback, leading to improvement and increased confidence in their abilities and finding their voice. Additionally, the syndicate groups allowed for efficient time management, reducing the time needed for individual assignments and allowing for more in-depth discussions and activities.



Figure 2: MSD workshop with local stakeholders in Doma-Rutu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

3.0 Results from Multistakeholder dialogues in Ghana and Nigeria

The MSD workshops started with presentations on the findings of the landscape situational analysis (Table 1 and Table 2). Here, presenters explained to participants the state and impacts of using natural resources and associated ecosystem services. The presentations also highlighted the underlying driving forces and pressures associated with the status of natural resources in the SELs. A series of discussions in smaller groups followed these presentations.

Table 1: List of resources, ecosystem services and land use types in target landscapes in Ghana and Nigeria

Domain	MSD findings in Ghana	MSD findings in Nigeria
Major natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About 80% of arable land (about 60% of which is used for agriculture) • Tinte and Tano-Offin Forest reserves. • Mankran, Abu and Aboabo rivers and their tributaries. • Floodplains and wetlands • Minerals, i.e., Gold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water resources: • Savannah vegetation and woodlands • Agricultural land • Grasslands and savannahs • Wetlands/Floodplains
Major ecosystem services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food (including wild foods) • Water for agriculture and domestic purposes • Forest products (Timber, firewood, and medicinal plants) • biodiversity conservation in forest reserves • flood control • Carbon sequestration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food • water for domestic and agricultural use • Carbon sequestration, soil conservation, and biodiversity conservation • water filtration, flood control, groundwater recharge and irrigation farming • grazing land for livestock and also supports wildlife, such as antelopes, baboons, and monkeys,
Major competing land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mining of minerals (mainly Gold) • Sand mining and quarrying operations • Agriculture (subsistence farming, plantations-coffee, cocoa, plantain, Palm nut-, vegetables, maize, cocoyam, rice, cassava, poultry, aquaculture) • Forestry (agroforestry-MTS teak tree plantations; Chainsaw operations), reserved forest, etc. • Expanding Built-up (residential, socio-economic infrastructure, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture/Livestock • Aquaculture • Forestry • Expanding Built-up residential, socio-economic infrastructure, etc.)

3.1 Perspectives on the landscape in Ahafo Ano Southwest District

From the ensuing group discussions in Ghana, many of the issues that came up validated most of the LSA results, with some latest information on the drivers of change, state, and dynamics of natural resource use in the target SEL in the AASWDA (Table 2). Prominent among the new information was disunity between farmers and miners (lack of cohesion and collective action), changes in family system practices where individual members no longer get livelihood support from relatively “wealthy” family members, increasing postharvest losses, communities not being able to produce much of what they eat (less than 50% is produced in communities); new diseases which they suspect are a result of degradation by mining and lumbering; increase in illegal mining

due to influx of new technology/equipment; and the inappropriateness of the Cinderella Trees for Agroforestry. Participants confirmed that in the last 10 years, there has been increased contact use of natural resources, increased discharge of waste into water ecosystems, and inappropriate land use transitions in the landscape. Prominent among the issues that validated the LSA included the increasing need for the conversion of more natural ecosystems into subsistence and cash crop farms; poorly constructed irrigation dams; lack of maintenance of irrigation infrastructure; destruction of irrigation dams due to illegal mining; siltation of rivers like the Aboabo due to increased runoff caused by deforestation/forest degradation; inadequate alternative job opportunities; weak/ill-equipped local government structures; Powerless unit committee and assembly members. Accordingly, participants agreed that the unsustainable use of natural resources has endangered biodiversity, ecosystem functioning, and human wellbeing in the Ahafo Ano Southwest District.

In the context of Ghana, participants' future visions of and pathways for sustainable SELs for AgriFood system resilience in the AASWDA by 2030 included a food-secure district by improving the tree-crop production system and reducing postharvest losses of cereals, bananas, cassava, and plantain; healthy forest and water ecosystems by consolidating the role of fringe communities as critical and equal stakeholders in forest and water management; spatial planning of landscapes that employ innovative techniques that are inclusive; sustainable mining through improving the capacity of miners in the use of good mining practices, including sustainable land reclamation methods; developing alternative livelihood sources in other areas of agriculture and animal husbandries such as poultry and piggery; and enhanced irrigation through rehabilitation of existing dams and the introduction of solar irrigation. These visions and pathways are considered goals for WP3, which seeks to co-develop and implement inclusive landscape management plans that maintain healthy agroforestry systems and water quality for resilient agri-food systems.

The discussions in AASWDA also echoed several key recommendations, captured in the LSA, for achieving sustainable development and conservation of ecosystems in a local context:

- The government and its partners (Forest Division, Minerals Commission, Water Resources Commission) should assist local authorities (district assembly, traditional leaders, unit committees, opinion leaders) in improving access to and management of natural resources and ecosystem services.

- This involves continuous human capacity development, specifically in remote sensing and geographic information systems for activities like spatial planning, integrated landscape management, integrated resources management, and monitoring of forest reserves.
- Encourage collaborative efforts among various stakeholders (e.g., *galamseyers*, farmers, chainsaw operators, water users, traders, traditional authorities, NGOs, and district assembly) to address undesired changes and impacts on the landscape.
- Create a common platform for stakeholders to actively discuss issues, make decisions, and impose consequences for non-compliance. Such decisions from participatory platforms have proven effective compared to top-down decisions.
- Support spatially focused investments in the landscape to achieve sustainable development and climate-smart objectives.
- Encourage private sector investment in sustainable social-ecological landscape (SSEL) goals, possibly through Impact Investment Advisory Services (IIAS).
- Consider investments in various challenged areas such as rice cultivation, aquaculture, vegetable farming, afforestation, and land reclamation.
- Continuously track changes to assess progress toward sustainable social-ecological goals, including sustainable land use, integrated landscape management (ILM), inclusive livelihood enhancement, and strengthened institutions.
- Strengthen coordination between the district assembly and law enforcement units to protect forest reserves, vegetation, and water bodies.
- Review existing conservation strategies, especially farm-related policies, forest reserve settlements, and mining near rivers and streams.
- Reevaluate the composition of the district mining committee to include those affected by the sector's activities.
- Implement strict measures against illegal mining through participatory multistakeholder engagements involving law enforcement units such as the police and the judiciary.

Table 2: Summary of findings from Ghana and Nigeria

DPSIR-SEL dimension	Findings from Ghana	Finding from Nigeria
Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for agriculture expansion • Need for alternative livelihood • Institutional failure/lapse • Corruption/Nepotism • Complex Land, Forest & water tenure • Issues related to benefit sharing • Urbanization • Pop. growth /migration/poverty • Socio-economic exclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food need • Energy need • Access to farmland • Farmer-header conflicts • Unsustainable fishing • Weak governance structures
Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased complexity in Land Use • Extensification of agriculture • Heightened illegal mining • Increased competition for forest resources (timber, farmlands, hunting of animals) • Influx of migrants • Increased pressure on socio-economic facilities • Increased competition for water resources (mining, agriculture, and domestic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansive/intensive use of floodplains in the dry season for food production • Increasing indiscriminate cutting of trees • Frequent Floods • Increased exploitation of fish and Aqua diversity • Increased complexity of LULC transitions
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polluted/silted water bodies and rivers have become perineal • Degraded lands/soil fertility loss • Degraded forest/deforestation • Fragmented natural vegetation • Consistent low agriculture yield (across all crops) • Failed aquaculture • Overwhelmed parastatal institutions/Institutional failures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constrained agricultural production • Land access challenges created by irrigation schemes • Increased urban Encroachment into floodplains • Contaminated water and the accumulation of pesticide residues in aquatic organisms • Decreasing soil fertility • Inadequate socio-economic infrastructure • Limited access to markets
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human health-related issues due to bad mining practices (e.g., skin diseases, buruli ulcers, malaria, diarrhea, etc.) include increased inadequacy of health care systems. • Heightened gender and social exclusion (particularly women and migrant populations) • Loss of water and forest-dependent livelihoods • Increasing economic poverty incidence • Decreasing ecosystem services (e.g., decreased food sufficiency in district, decreased water quality for domestic purposes, decreased Timber, and Non-timber forest products, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constrained sufficiency in food production • The harmful effects of fishing with Gamalin 20 on the ecosystem include the death of non-targeted aquatic species, the disruption of natural food webs, and the degradation of water quality. • Postharvest losses • Economic poverty • Land use conflicts (e.g., between farmers and herders) • Increased poverty and food insecurity, fewer options for a livelihood, entrenched inequities in access to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental insecurity (including soil fertility loss, flooding, sanitation in living environments, water quality and quantity, fragmented forest cover, loss of biodiversity, malfunctioning ecosystems, etc.) • 	<p>production resources for a living, soil and water damage, degradation of the vegetation,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodiversity loss, removal of vegetation exposes the soil to surface runoff, resulting in erosion and soil fertility loss • drying up and contaminated rivers
Institutional Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AASWD initiative for capacity building on effective spatial planning and monitoring • DMoFA drives to enhance the adoption of good agronomic practices (GAP). • Government strategies in the fight against illegal mining • The formalization of illegal mining into community-based mining, with training in sustainable mining. • Modified Taungya System (MTS) to intensify reforestation • REDD+-related activities by the Forestry Commission to intensify the afforestation drive and reduce deforestation and forest degradation • AASWD is reviving traditional norms, values, and regulations relevant to water and forest conservation/preservation • Education on the overexploitation of NTFPs • Establishment of Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) • National Forest Plantation and Development Programme (NFPDP) • Public Private Partnership for afforestation, • Youth in Afforestation Programmes (YAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasarawa State is the Forestry Law of 2007 • Nasarawa State Environmental Protection Agency (NASEPA) • Community-Based Natural Resources Management Program • Agricultural Policy for Nasarawa State (2019-2027),

3.2 Perspectives from the Doma-Rutu landscape

The MSD in the Doma-Rutu productive landscape confirmed that dwindling water resources affect agricultural productivity, especially during dry seasons. Flooding of rice fields around the Ohina River is also a major challenge. Charcoal production and firewood trading, common livelihood activities among women in the landscape, are contributing to the degradation of forests and siltation of streams. Logging/timber trading, though an important livelihood activity, was also confirmed as contributing to deforestation in the landscape. The participants also confirmed that due to the poor road network/state of road infrastructure, Okada (motorcycle taxi) has become a major livelihood alternative for youth in the watershed. Against the claim that the Doma Irrigation

Scheme denies farmers access to farmland, the scheme management explained that farmlands are hired to interested farmers at N12,000 per hectare per annum payable to the Scheme. The representative of the herders associated the cause of the frequent conflict between farmers and herdsmen with the obliteration or takeover of cattle routes (labi) by farmers. The farmers disagreed that such routes no longer exist, and such claims no longer stand in the modern world. The State government has proposed Operation Green Nasarawa State, which networks with charcoal producers, firewood traders, tree loggers, and timber traders.

It was found that the Federal government has tried to address forest degradation and deforestation issues. One of such initiative is the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscape (ACReSAL) Project, which is jointly funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the World Bank, is going on in the State government toward revitalizing the forest of the State. Another revelation was that female farmers constituted the majority in the landscape, cultivating paddy rice in valleys and cereals in the uplands. From the discussions participants claimed females formed nearly 60% of registered members on the Rice Innovative Platform as farmers and processors. Women were also found to be involved in vegetable farming, using irrigation for okra, pepper, and spinach and water pumps to bring water into their fields. The Women Farmers Alliance Network (WOFAN) confirmed to have been highly active in the organization and training of women in the landscape, they claim accounts for the high number of females in farming. On the environmental front, participants unanimously agreed there was an urgent need to deter people from indiscriminate tree felling and charcoal production. According to one of the participants the State government has proposed Operation Green Nasarawa State, which networks with charcoal producers, firewood traders, tree loggers, and timber traders to promote sustainability. One such drive is the introduction of the Forest Trust Fund. The State government initiated the Forest Trust Fund, and a fee of five hundred Naira (N500:00) is charged per truck of charcoal. This fund is intended to be used for a statewide tree-planting effort.

At the end of the plenary discussions, the following recommendations were considered and agreed upon as the way forward by the participants:

- There is a need for increased government presence in the landscape to create an enabling environment that will enhance the inclusiveness of stakeholders in the management of the

landscape's natural resources, prevent existing and potential conflicts, and halt the degradation of the landscape.

- To sustain the use of the floodplains for dry season farming in the area, the farmers need to be organized and trained on effective water management to improve their practices and increase their productivity.
- Prospecting groundwater within the fringes of the floodplains to support irrigation during the dry season and to expand irrigated areas is strongly recommended. Tube wells and Aquifer Storage and Recovery technologies can be deployed in this regard. Farmers in Iwashi are optimistic that shallow tube wells will work in their area.
- Innovative water management techniques and technologies include alternate wetting and drying technology for paddy production and using a pipe irrigation system to convey in place of the open water conveyance method.
- The Doma and Rutu irrigation scheme's custodian needs to put the vast land under their command to productive use during the dry season. This will minimize the rapid degradation caused by erosion and the pressure on the floodplain due to eroded sediment deposition.
- An alternative source of fuel for domestic/household use, especially converting and using the paddy rice husks and stubble briquettes, biogas, and deployment of the AfricaRice Gasifier technology, is strongly recommended. This may reduce the pace of deforestation in the landscape. Meanwhile, the relevant government ministries should be given to raising native tree seedlings to re-forest marginal lands that are exposed to degradation.
- Open grazing occurs in a vast portion of the landscape after rain-fed crops are harvested. Therefore, paying attention to the practice of open grazing by livestock in the landscape is recommended.
- Establishing laws that mandate the continuous gathering of reliable environmental data, land cover, and changes to inform experts' decisions on agricultural systems and provide reliable environmental decision support tools is recommended. This will improve land use planning, enhance better management of natural resources, and improve resilience to climate change.

4.0 Building partnerships and community mobilization for resilient landscapes

The TAFS-WCA-WP3 built on partnerships, engaged local communities, involved government authorities, and leveraged scientific expertise to engender sustainable, productive landscapes in

target landscapes Ghana and Nigeria. Community participation and engagement play a central role in this initiative. Community leaders, assembly members, and resource user groups have actively mobilized and encouraged participation among residents. As part of building partnerships and mobilizing community members, several strategies were adopted for the MSD in Ghana and Nigeria:

Multistakeholder involvement:

The dialogues strictly adhered to the following specific principles and elements of a successful MSD: *inclusiveness, transparency, respect, facilitation, and decision-making*. All relevant stakeholders were invited to participate, regardless of their background or position. This ensured a diversity of perspectives and experiences are considered. The process was also transparent from the beginning, with clear objectives, agenda, and decision-making processes. This helped to build trust and confidence among stakeholders. All participants were treated with respect and their contributions valued. This created an atmosphere of dialogue and collaboration. A skillful and experienced facilitator was used considering the need guide the discussion, to ensure everyone's voice was heard, and managed conflict constructively. Decisions regarding dialogue agenda were made collaboratively, considering the interests of all stakeholders. This fostered ownership and commitment to the outcomes. To capture these elements/principles, the following were some of the stakeholders involved in the MSDs:

- Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly (AASWD) and related departments/units
- Community leaders from Mmrobem, Barniekrom, and Kunsu (local communities)
- Assembly members and leaders of resource user groups (local governance and community representatives)
- Gender balance in participation
- All social groups (e.g., PwLD, migrants, youth groups, etc.)
- Government agencies or departments
- Three Ministries in Nasarawa State: Agriculture, Environment & Natural Resources and Water Resources,
- Doma Local Government Authority,
- Farmer-based- and community-based- Associations like the Association of Small Scale Agro-Processing in Nigeria (ASSAPIN), Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN),

Nasarawa Branch, Maize Farmers Association of Nigeria, All Farmers Association in Nigeria (AFAN),

- Active Non-Governmental Associations with interest in landscape management in the State like ProjectAgape, Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), WOFAN, etc
- Community representatives from Alagye, Iwashi, Rutu and Doma-Odorogya communities

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI):

GESI was a critical aspect of these MSDs. It ensured that all voices were heard and that the needs of marginalized groups are considered. Ensuring everyone had a seat at the table was paramount. Targeted outreach went beyond mere invitations, actively engaging with marginalized groups. Whether navigating language barriers or overcoming cultural hurdles, every effort was made to ensure their knowledge and perspectives were invited to the dialogue. This deliberate inclusivity fostered a richer tapestry of thought, where voices often unheard finally resonated with purpose.

From the outset, gender dynamics were treated with keen sensitivity. The facilitator, adept at navigating these ever-shifting currents, ensured a level playing field. Unconscious biases were identified and countered, creating a safe space for open exchange regardless of gender roles or expectations. This attentiveness fostered a vibrant atmosphere where all opinions felt valued and respected, allowing the dialogue to blossom into a truly collective endeavor.

Co-organizers and volunteering efforts:

In Ghana, representatives from AASWD and community leaders from the communities were involved as co-organizers. This suggests a collaborative approach between an IWMI (as an external organization) and local community leadership. The Coordinating Director of the Assembly took the initiative to send out letters inviting the parastatal department and agency heads to participate in the MSD (presumably a relevant event or initiative). This demonstrates government involvement and an attempt to engage higher-level authorities. Assembly members and leaders of resource user groups volunteered to mobilize community participants. This indicates a grassroots effort to engage the local population and encourage participation in the TAFS-WCA initiative.

In Nigeria, ASSAPIN, Project Agape and YMCA were all willing to mobilize the community to develop an inclusive landscape management plan for the Doma-Rutu SEL. ASSAPIN, a vibrant community grassroots organization, brought their deep understanding of local needs and customs to the table. Project Agape, fueled by unwavering conviction and a passion for environmental justice, added a powerful voice for the marginalized. And YMCA, with its long history of fostering youth empowerment and social cohesion, ensured that the future generation had a seat at the table.

Together, their diverse strengths combined to ignite a community-driven movement. They envisioned a landscape management plan that wasn't imposed from above, but blossomed from the fertile ground of local knowledge, shared values, and collective action. Their unwavering commitment to inclusivity promised a future where every voice mattered, every perspective valued, and every hand working together to build a sustainable and just future for the Doma-Rutu landscape.

5.0 Milestones, potential impacts, lessons learned and opportunities:

Major Milestones

Multistakeholder dialogues led to significant milestones. The dialogue wasn't just about talking, it was about seeing eye-to-eye. Through open communication, stakeholders gained a deeper understanding of the complex landscape they shared. From farmers to conservationists, each perspective found its place, painting a richer picture of the challenges and opportunities before them. Building on this shared understanding, collaboration ignited. Stakeholders joined forces, no longer isolated voices but a chorus of ideas. Together, they brainstormed solutions to tackle shared concerns, whether it was managing water resources or fostering biodiversity. With a united front, even the most daunting challenges seemed manageable.

Decisions were no longer dictated from the above but woven from the collective wisdom of the group. Informed by diverse perspectives and data, stakeholder voices resonated loud and clear. Decisions became more inclusive, reflecting the needs and aspirations of all involved, laying a foundation for lasting progress. Empowerment bloomed from inclusivity. Stakeholders, once feeling disengaged, found their voices amplified and their actions validated. Equipped with knowledge and agency, they transformed from participants to stewards, actively managing their landscape with newfound confidence and skills. The dialogue didn't end with words exchanged.

Stronger relationships blossomed, bridging gaps between communities and sectors. Stakeholders, once strangers, became partners, their shared journey forging bonds of trust and collaboration. With a network of support and shared vision, the future of the landscape seemed brighter than ever.

Potential Impacts

The MSDs have the potential to create positive impacts across various areas:

- ***Environmental:*** Improved environmental management practices and sustainable resource use.
- ***Social:*** Increased social equity and inclusion, and empowered communities.
- ***Economic:*** Enhanced economic opportunities and improved livelihoods.
- ***Institutional:*** Strengthened institutions and local governance structures.

Lessons Learned

By reflecting on the experiences, valuable lessons were learnt that could improve future MSDs:

- ***The importance of long-term commitment:*** Building trust and achieving lasting results requires long-term commitment from all stakeholders.
- ***The need for flexibility:*** The process could have been more flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging needs during the MSDs.
- ***The value of continuous learning:*** Dialogue participants and facilitators could have been more open to learning from each other.

6.0 Conclusion

The validation exercises conducted in the Ahafo Ano and Doma-Rutu landscapes proved highly beneficial, providing a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to engage and contribute to the process. Several positive outcomes were observed, which can have a significant impact on the success of the project and the overall wellbeing of the landscape:

Satisfaction and Positive Feedback: A successful validation meeting ensures all stakeholders are satisfied with the outcomes. Participants provided positive feedback on the presentations, their relevance, and the proposed recommendations in this case. This indicates that the exercise met the needs and expectations of the stakeholders, promoting their confidence in the process.

Engagement and Awareness: The validation workshop effectively presented the key findings from the LSA to the participants, and they were actively engaged in the interrogation process to

consider the integrity and the extent to which such could be considered critical. The stakeholders could relate to the study's findings, gaining awareness of the detrimental consequences of a mismanaged landscape, evident through the presentations.

Overall, the validation exercises have not only contributed to the quality of the final report but have also fostered improved relationships among stakeholders and greater confidence in the project's potential success. The engagement and collaboration of various parties, including government officials, are vital steps toward effective landscape management and sustainable development. The levels of involvement have also awakened the consciousness of the communities of the state of their landscape and motivated their commitment to developing the management plan to ensure judicious use and sustainability.