



STAR-GHANA SUPPORTS VOICE GHANA TO FOSTER STRONGER VOICE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN LOCAL LEVEL DEVELOPMENT

VOICE GHANA is fostering stronger voice of persons with disabilities in the Nkwanta South, Nkwanta North, Krachi East, Akatsi North and Central Tongu Districts of the Volta Region for their active participation in local level development and decision making processes. This initiative is being facilitated by STAR-Ghana with funding from UKaid, DANIDA and EUROPEAN UNION. Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness (STAR-Ghana) is a governance and accountability programme, which supports civil society to strengthen and enable citizens engage with the state and with government to ensure accountable, transparent and responsive governance at both local and national levels.

Mr. Francis Asong, the Executive Director of VOICE GHANA disclosed this in a press briefing in Ho 30th August 2017. He said, the GHS122,000 project is being implemented in partnership with the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) Volta Regional Council and the Volta Regional Office of JoyNews in Ho until May 2018.

According to Mr. Asong, fifteen disability Self-help Groups in the five target districts are benefiting from the project. Each of the beneficiary Self-help Group has selected an influential community member such as Presiding Members of District Assemblies, Assembly members and a Media practitioner as their Inclusion Ambassadors to support them in amplifying their voice at community and District Assembly levels.

The project has also facilitated the process for Development Planning Officers from each of the target District Assembly to hold meetings with beneficiary persons with disabilities in their respective communities, together with their community chiefs, Assembly members and Inclusion Ambassadors. This was to collate one key development priority from each of the beneficiary Self-help Group for inclusion in the 2018-2021 Medium Term Development Plans of the various District Assemblies.

Mr. Charles Nyante, the Programs Manager of VOICE GHANA disclosed that the beneficiary groups of persons with disabilities pointed out very important inclusive development initiatives such as inclusive school facilities, inclusive Community-based Health and Planning Services (CHPS) compound, and accessible boreholes that can be patronised by all community members including persons with disabilities. Mr Nyante also hinted that District Chief Executives and Coordinating Directors of the target District Assemblies have welcomed the project, and have assured VOICE GHANA and beneficiary persons with disabilities of their readiness to include the collated development priorities in their respective Medium Term Development Plans and Budgets for 2018-2021, which preparation is underway.

Mr Nyante further disclosed that the project will also engage each target District Assembly to form a Disability Caucus among their respective Assembly members, to help champion the cause of persons with disabilities. "We shall link-up Inclusion Ambassadors with the Disability Caucus at each Assembly so that, together, they can support persons with disabilities to demand benefits from provisions of public goods and services at the community and District Assembly levels", Mr. Nyante disclosed.

Hon. Dr. Prince Sodoke Amuzu District Chief Executive of Akatsi North District, confirmed the Assembly's readiness to prioritise the development initiatives collated by their Planning Officer from persons with disabilities at Ave-Dakpa, Ave-Afiadenyigba and Ave-Sanyi; in their Medium Term Development Plan.

Nana Kpolah, the Chief of Chiaso in the Nkwanta South District was enthused about the project, which he said, has enabled persons with disabilities and some opinion leaders in his community to outline a key development initiative for their District Assembly to be factored into their Medium Term Development Plan, and to implement for them.

Mr G.K Adzayi, the leader of the disability Self-help Group at Mafi-Kumase in the Central Tongu District, said this is the first time an official from their District Assembly came to them to collate their development priority, which they promised to include in their Medium Term Development Plan, and have thus, signed an MoU to that effect with VOICE GHANA and their Self-help Group.

Mr Matthew Amuzu, the Regional Director of YMCA, Volta Regional Council thinks the project is very important in addressing emerging inclusive development needs, not only for persons with disabilities but the community as a whole, including the aged. He expressed his appreciation to VOICE GHANA for the partnership, and call for more of such joint efforts in future to help address countless issues confronting the marginalised and socially excluded groups in our society, especially the youth.

Signed

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For immediate release by:

1. JoyNews, Ho
2. Ghana News Agency, Ho
3. Daily Graphic, Ho