# SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

## 1. Proposed program title, main partners and geographical location

Proposed program title: Empowerment for Life – Equity and Sustainable Development for All

Main partners: Ghana Developing Communities Association and Youth Empowerment for Life.

Geographical location: Expected to continue in 5 districts in Ghana’s Northern Region, combined with increased focus on advocacy and networking at national and international level.

## 2. sector/thematic focus and its relevance to the given context

Ghana has come a long way since Ghana Friends started its engagement in the country 40 years ago. Many impressive results have been achieved along the way. For example, Ghana managed to achieve the Millennium Development goal 1 about halving extreme poverty and 2 about universal primary education by 2015. Economic growth rates have been among the highest in the world and elections are considered relatively free and fair.

The president of Ghana has gone viral with his vision of ‘Ghana beyond aid’ that envisages a future where donors no longer play a key role in financing the state budget and hence the running of the country. Denmark’s official engagement in Ghana has also entered a new phase with the withdrawal of bilateral development assistance and a shift towards trade. These achievements are real and impressive, but they also have a tendency to over­shadow a more complex reality. Inequalities in areas such as health, education and income persist and are in many cases growing between North and South Ghana and between rural and urban areas. The economic growth is not equally distributed and not necessarily translated into improve­ments in human development.

Since UNDP started producing the Human Development report in 1990 there has been an increasing focus on other dimensions of development than economic growth. UNDP Ghana recently released its second regional report ‘Northern Ghana Human Development report 2018’, which points out the significant socio-economic disparities between the Northern Savannah Ecological zone[[1]](#footnote-1) and the rest of Ghana using the Human Development Index (HDI). Although Ghana as a whole has an HDI score of 0.575, a closer look at figures for Northern Ghana reveals a much lower score of 0.116. The Northern regions continue to have the highest incidence of poverty in the country. Poor quality of education, high youth unemployment, low productivity and food security exacerbated by climate change are some of the other factors contributing to the low score. Other international agencies have taken a broader view of development and adopted a more holistic view of the state of economic development. A recent report from the World Economic Forum, the Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017, points to the fact that Ghana has done less well viewed from a perspective of inclusive growth. Ghana scores relatively low on the Inclusive Development Index (IDI) and comes in as 55th among 70 developing countries.

So what characterizes countries that have succeeded in achieving inclusive growth? World Economic Forum points to the necessity of having a policy and institutional eco-system with seven pillars underpinning economic growth. As examples, pillar 1 deals with equitable access to quality education; pillar 2 with good jobs, wages and livelihoods; pillar 3 with sound institutions, business and political ethics and pillar 7 with equitable taxation and social protection. Clearly, Ghana has some way to go in terms of building up and maintaining that eco-system, and our program is designed to contribute to that.

## 3. Summary of the program main strategic priorities

In view of the above and the expertise of GV and its partners, the main strategic priorities will be education; governance; and inclusive growth and employment contributing to the overall program objective:

**Civil society actors contribute to increased equity and sustainable development in Ghana**

**Education** is one of the main pillars of a society that is able to grow and convert its growth into human development. Ghana has come a long way in terms of access to education, but there are serious concerns regarding quality and equity. Education delivery in Northern Ghana, especially in rural areas, receives far less resources than urban and southern parts of the country. This is seen e.g. in the absence of adequate education infrastructure within reach of young school children, in high pupil teacher ratio, high proportion of untrained teachers, and lack of teaching materials; all important factors in achieving good learning outcomes. Adequate spending and appropriate use of resources are fundamental in ensuring a well-functioning education system. This requires strong governance structures and accountable institutions from ministerial level through to the individual school. GV and its partner School for Life (SfL) have a proven track record of addressing key challenges in education and will keep up the effort in the coming program. The experience and expertise will be used to address access, quality and equity through advocacy, capacity building as well as testing and documenting appropriate models and methods.

**Governance** is a requirement for human development; and civil society has an important role to play by organizing and engaging people to demand their rights and press for transparency, accountability and better access to basic services. We define good governance as people centred with decentralisation as one of the main vehicles. The essence of Ghana’s decentralization policy is to promote popular participation and ownership through devolution of power, functions, competence and resources to the district level. There has been some success after nearly three decades of implementation, but fundamental challenges remain unaddressed, as for example low capacity of local government. Issues of voice, accountability and participation of citizens – not least women and youth - also remain serious challenges. GV and its partners have worked to improve this in various ways, and these efforts will be intensified. The intensified effort took off in 2018, when GV was granted additional funds to increase civil society capacity to engage in and lead initiatives that promote improved local governance. The main elements of that intervention are citizen-led monitoring of capital development projects in the districts and civil society engagement in district revenue generation, utilization and provision of public services. Corruption has emerged as one of the major concerns of citizens and there is growing awareness of how it undermines good governance and hence development. Our partners are positioning them­selves as strong actors in the fight against corruption and for that reason it will be a theme in the new program.

**Inclusive growth and employment:** One of the main reasons that Northern Ghana scores significantly lower on the Human Development Index is the low living standard measured by employment and the pattern of economic production. Poverty remains widespread and economic transformation is hindered by a number of factors, such as youth receiving inadequate or inappropriate training for the job market, low productivity and unsustainable farming made worse by climate change. Food security and nutritional indicators are particularly poor in Northern Ghana and access to economic opportunities and finance is limited. The new program will promote inclusive growth and support employment opportunities particularly for women and youth. This strategic intervention area is new for GV and its partners, but it is a further development of the food security & livelihood and entrepreneurship of E4L III.

# CAPACITY, PARTNERSHIP AND LEARNING

## 4. Presentation of applicant capacity including how recommendations from past RevApp/ CapApp have been followed up

In the past 10 years GV has been through a number of learning and capacity building processes due to changes in funding modalities. In that time we have devoted considerable resources to develop our strategies, systems and procedures as well as build our capacity in strategic areas. This has placed great demands on our ability to learn and adjust the organisation accordingly. The organisational structure of GV has been revised to reflect the changes in roles and requirements. The division of labour between staff and volunteers has been redefined and made clearer. Whereas volunteers in earlier years were more directly involved in project work, they are now involved in decision-making at strategic level and in building the capacity of partner organisations. Further, there is more emphasis on activities in Denmark related to development education, fundraising and networking.

When becoming a framework organisation in 2015, GV was required to raise 20% of the Danida grant in own financing. Despite concerns, GV was able to gear the organization to fulfil the requirement. Fundraising involves the entire organization, staff and volunteers, and most of the funds are raised on the basis of strong networks and personal relations. The main part of co-financing is presently fulfilled through the collaboration with the French NGO Acting for Life’s PAMOBARMA[[2]](#footnote-2) project, which has given new learning and networks in the West African Region.

Financial management and administrative capacity is one of the areas, where Ghana Friends have made major efforts to develop and improve systems and procedures. This was done in response to the recommendation from the capacity assessment in 2013 and one of the first steps was to select one audit firm for the entire program. As part of the preparations to become a frame organisation in 2014, GV and partners redesigned the financial system to make it more efficient. This was facilitated by the adoption of a more integrated organisational structure. A part time controller, based in Denmark, was recruited in 2014 to develop a new financial monitoring system and build the capacity of partners. As reported in our results report, there have been a number of benefits from these efforts. This has been confirmed by a control visit from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and a recent control visit by CISU in December 2018.

In 2011 GV and its partners developed anti-corruption policies, a whistle blower policy as well as a code of conduct. These are reflected in individual staff contracts, Employee Handbook, and in GVs agreements with the partners. The policies and agreements include action plans and lines of communication, in case of any suspicion of misuse of funds. Since then anti-corruption is brought up at strategic partner meetings to keep the issue alive. More recently the concept of Value for Money was introduced at a strategic partner meeting in 2016, and it has since become integrated into all aspects of the program cycle, and is an integrated approach right from the district level.

We have worked systematically to strengthen our focus on results and qualify our M&E work. An appraisal in 2011 pointed out a need to move from activity based to results based monitoring. A number of initiatives were taken in this direction to increase reflection, analysis and learning; and a Mid Term Review in 2013 indicated some success, but also the need to step up the efforts. Since then M&E has been a major focus area, which led to the recruitment of a dedicated M&E officer with the partner, the development of a manual, as well as streamlining and strengthening of systems and procedures. Documentation and reporting have improved significantly as a result of efforts to develop and refine formats. The work has involved all relevant program staff, and learning is shared at an annual staff event, which creates a strong sense of ownership and commitment among all involved. GV has played an instrumental role in this process through facilitation, follow up and quality control.

## 5. Key lessons learned from past grants which will be used in the program

The organisational structure of the program underwent a major change when E4L Phase III began in 2015. There have been subsequent adjustments, and there is a strong and effective set-up today. One of the main changes was to have stronger presence in the program districts. Up to then, the partners had, generally, been working from the offices in Tamale. District offices were introduced with teams having skills in civil society capacity building, and an individual per team with technical capacity in each strategic area. Due to the build-up of a strong learning and sharing culture this has worked very well. Head office program staff have been organised in teams, e.g. advocacy team, monitoring-evaluation-reporting team, and finance team; and there has been strong cooperation and coordination platforms between district and head office teams. There have been clear reporting lines while a culture of dynamic interaction has been nurtured to source knowledge from all levels. This will be continued with adjustments where relevant.

In 2015 E4L started working with 300 civil society groups, reducing the number to 240 after the 26% Danida cut in 2016. The approach has been to develop organisational and technical capacity as a basis for supporting the groups to engage in advocacy and networking. Supporting the groups to become capable and legitimate actors with knowledge in their technical interest area has proven to give the groups strong leverage in pursuing advocacy. At the same time it has become clear that not all groups wish to engage in advocacy; and the development path of such groups can be adjusted to what they find meaningful. Generally, the organisational capacity building of groups has been quite comprehensive. The new program will use these achievements and tailor future collaboration with groups more specifically to their needs.

It is not new to GV and partners to work with models and innovation, but the value of using clear and well-documented models has really crystallized during recent years. This goes for innovative models developed in cooperation between GV and the partners, which offer opportunities for reaching wider through replication by other funders. Examples are the School for Life model, the entrepreneurship boot camp, and the youth parliament, while other potential models are in the pipeline. It has also proven very successful to integrate models developed by other actors, e.g. the farmer field school and the Village Savings and Loans Association. Modelling and innovation will be further developed and used strategically.

In E4L Phase III, governance has been a cross-cutting issue dealing with a) internal governance in the targeted groups from the perspective of developing well-functioning, legitimate civil society organisations, and b) governance vis-à-vis duty bearers especially in relation to the thematic areas of education, youth, and food security & livelihoods. It became clear, however, that there is a clear scope for giving more space to governance; and that citizens and civil society groups can mobilise and play a meaningful role in addressing other pressing issues of local governance. This is also a natural next step building on the CBO development roadmap used by E4L to guide capacity development of civil society groups from a level of basic organisational skills to maturity. The program has worked with local government in a two-pronged approach of a) supporting civil society to know their rights and develop skills to demand them by engaging and challenging local government; and b) in various ways working with local government to strengthen the capacity of an often quite weak supply side. The local partners have strong legitimacy with local and regional government, which makes this dual approach possible, as seen in the recently started capital monitoring and internal revenue generating activities.

## 6. Presentation of partnership approach, program partners to be continued, and proposed roles and division of labour

It remains central to GVs work to build and develop partnerships with civil society organizations in

Ghana. Our approach to partnership continues to be guided by the Ghana Friends Partnership Strategy (2015-2019), which distinguishes between organizational partnerships and other more targeted and time-bound types of partnership. The strategy provides a systematic approach to partnership with an objective to broaden the relations with Ghanaian civil society, determine the right level of commitment and match the expectations of partners. It will be revised at the end of 2019 to reflect experiences and future plans according to the new program application. The two main organisational partners that will be continued in the program are:

**Ghanaian Developing Communities Association** (GDCA) has implemented projects and programs for more than 30 years and been able to develop new areas of expertise and adapt to development trends. From the start GDCA and GV have had a strong mutual partnership, which has developed through vari­ous stages. GDCA is an umbrella organisation with six subsidiaries; two of these - School for Life (SfL) and Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP) - are independent organisations and part of the GV/GDCA cooperation. GDCA is a respected, legitimate civil society organization with strong operational capacity that is able to network to further their agenda and attract other funding.

**Youth Empowerment for Life** (YEfL)was founded in 2010 to create a formal structure for a group of Ghanaian youth who had worked with GV since 2005. Since the inception of the E4L program in 2010, YEfL has been a partner and been on a steep learning curve with support from GV and GDCA. The organisation is building networking relationships with other CSOs, and engaging with agencies and institutions responsible for youth development. Capacity development of YEfL includes the development of new models, such as the entrepreneurship model, as well as strengthening strategic and management capacity to attract and handle multi-donor funding. YEfL has already been successful in attracting some funding from other donors and is beginning to carve out a space for itself as a strong actor in the area of youth empowerment and employment.

The organisational partners, YEfL and GDCA, jointly implement the E4L program and have formal cooperation agreements with GV. GV will have oversight of program implementation, ensure that the required systems are in place as well as provide technical assistance and quality assurance. GV will be overall responsible to the donor.

It remains relevant to work with GDCA and YEFL for many reasons; not least because they are legitimate membership based local organisations able to include and represent their marginalised constituencies with a strong voice. This stands out in a Northern Ghana, where civil society is generally weak, uncoordinated and dominated by international organisations. Through our partnership GDCA and YEfL are in a unique position to use their grass root base to lift up other organisations in the communities.

In consultation with GV, the partners will engage in new targeted and time-bound partnerships, building on positive results in recent years. This will be traditional civil society actors as well as new kinds of actors such as movements and entrepreneurs. It will require a certain risk willingness and ability to navigate in a more fluid context. We will make deliberate efforts to find partners that can complement our efforts, rather than necessarily build the expertise ourselves, and find strong partners at national level. In addition, it will continue to be important for GV to develop and main­tain other types of partnerships, such as non-funding based strategic partner­ships. This type of partnership can be with organisations, institutions or networks which a) serve as a platform for learning and sharing as well as building a stronger voice or b) have a demand for knowledge and access to partners and communities in Ghana, in return for access to fundraising or other opportunities in GV’s interest, e.g. educational institutions.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## 7. Program justification and intervention logic

GV continues to be guided by a vision of a democratic and just Ghana where resources are distributed more equally between North and South, rural and urban, men and women, old and young, leaving no one behind. This vision remains highly relevant at this stage of Ghana’s development. GV’s program will contribute to this vision based on the assumption that citizens are able to work together in an organized and inclusive civil society that participates in democratic processes and actively engages with duty bearers. It is also our assumption, backed by experience, that a stronger civil society can influence the government system and other actors such as traditional authorities at local and national level; and that these actors are open to engagement. This understanding of civil society informs the new program objective “**Civil society actors contribute to increased equity and sustainable development in Ghana”.**

Up to now the main focus was on civil society’s interaction with state actors and, to a lesser degree, market actors. With the developments in the Ghanaian context and the stronger focus on the private sector, the program will expand its strategic interventions with civil society interacting with and influencing the market, to promote inclusion of smallholder farmers, women and youth.

The Human Rights Based Approach remains at the centre of the strategies of GV and our partners. The program is designed to pursue SDG 16 by placing an empowered civil society at the centre, as a means to promote an inclusive and fair society with accountable and effective institutions. Likewise, the program will contribute to SDG 17, as it builds on a strong partnership between GV and its partners as well as other actors and institutions. SDG 1 on ending poverty, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 10on reducing inequality cut across the program.

The gap between North and South Ghana remains strong and we have come to realize that it is necessary to place increased emphasis on the national level and address inequality in new types of collaborations. This might be done by seconding staff to strong national advocacy organizations, or supporting these to influence national political processes, or join or initiate movements that work to achieve our objectives. In doing that we will also look beyond traditional forms of civil society and work with e.g. socio-economic enterprises and digital communities.

 Assessments show a strong improvement in the capacity and activity level of the many CBOs, E4L has worked with. This forms a solid foundation for new forms of collaboration with some of these groups. Likewise the partners have improved their capacity to document issues, develop advocacy strategies and engage in strategic networking and advocacy at national and international level. This places them in a good position to make an impact in their areas of expertise and link up with new actors in the coming years.

The above objective, achievements from the previous program and our analysis of the context form the basis of our Theory of Change (ToC). We have selected the 3 strategic intervention areas because they are closely linked key pillars of sustainable development and areas of expertise for GV and partners. The design and organisation of the program builds on our experience and will link the strategic areas to ensure synergy at all levels. The strategic inter­vention areas Governance, Education, and Inclusive Growth and Employment are described in the following:

## Governance

The importance of good governance and strong institutions is widely acknowledged as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 16. It is evident that human development in Ghana is severely hindered by weak institutions, corruption and low levels of participation, voice and access to information. **The desired change is a more transparent and accountable government, which is able to deliver quality basic services to all parts of Ghana**. Despite an increase in wealth, the functionality and service level of government structures continue to be very low in Northern Ghana[[3]](#footnote-3). Civil society plays a crucial role in improving this and GV and its partners are well positioned to contribute after having worked intensively with community based organisation in Northern Ghana as well as having engaged in governance related research and advocacy at district and national level.

The objective for this strategic focus area is:

**Civil society engages in and leads initiatives that improve government transparency, accountability and performance**

In E4L III governance was a cross cutting theme with an emphasis on the governance of the targeted community based organisations and contributing to good governance at the local level. In the new program there will more emphasis on contributing to the desired change by working at the national level with other actors, such as civil society organizations, think tanks and the media. Policy influencing and advocacy at the national level is not new, but more resources will be allocated to this. The negative consequences of inequality between the North and South need to be recognized and tackled at the national level; and most governance issues are ultimately determined by decisions taken at the central level. Corruption is one of the areas, where it is more effective to collaborate with other strong actors operating at the national level.

GVs main partners, GDCA and YEfL, will play a key role in achieving the objective through their legitimacy, presence in the communities and relationship with government structures. Our collaboration has helped them become strong local membership based organisations that are able to speak on behalf of local communities and represent them at national level.

We have had good results with strategic use of communication and media, such as radio and social media, to give voice to the marginalized and advocate for change. It has also proven to be a way of linking local issues with the national agenda. This work will be continued and boosted where relevant. Likewise, we will continue to conduct research on the functionality of the local government system in collaboration with other like-minded organisations.

The expected outcomes are:

1. Communities benefit from capital development projects and quality basic services
2. Local revenue collection in the districts is improved and tax justice is promoted
3. Youth in Northern Region organize, engage in decision-making processes and make their voices heard locally and nationally
4. Civil society organizations know their rights, are able to identify mismanagement and corrupt practices and join forces to fight corruption
5. Civil Society Organizations advocate for equitable distribution of public resources and services

The following main strategic choices are closely interlinked and serve to fulfil the objective within governance: 1) Civil society promoting accountable governance, 2) Civil society engaging in revenue generation and tax justice, 3) Youth in governance and citizen journalism, and 4) Civil society fighting corruption.

### 1) Civil society promoting accountable governance

A main element will be citizen-led monitoring of capital development projects in the districts. These deal with the construction of public facilities in the districts, such as schools and health clinics. The projects are complex and it has a number of negative consequences for the communities, if they are not well managed. In some cases the public facilities are not constructed at all; referred to as ghost projects. GV and its partners have started to equip citizens groups with skills and tools to monitor the projects and engage with the relevant authorities. Experience so far shows that citizen led monitoring improves the management and quality of the projects. We will also conduct research and use the evidence to advocate for improvements in governance. An example of this is the on-going research on the functionality of district audit committees. It will be a priority to continually refine our interventions and explore new ways of working with accountability, including use of technology.

### 2) Civil society engagement in revenue generation and tax justice

The Local Governance Act 2016 authorizes MMDAs[[4]](#footnote-4) to collect tax revenue locally as a way of generating funds to supplement government funding for infrastructure and services. Districts in Northern Region raise very limited funds and depend on inadequate funding from central government. It is a vicious cycle, as the amount of revenue generated locally is one of the determinants of the amount received from central government. The low level of local revenue, coupled with misapplication of funds by local authorities, stand in the way of delivering basic quality services. GV and its partners will collaborate with MMDAs to improve their revenue generation by training tax collectors and strengthening systems. CBOs and taxpayer groups e.g. market traders will be trained to monitor the collection and utilization of internal revenue through social accountability tools. Apart from strengthening transparency and accountability, the monitoring also limits revenue leakages and promotes the fight against corruption. The work so far indicates that this combined with information campaigns boost citizen confidence and willingness to pay tax. Citizens also become more willing to pay tax if they are confident that local revenue is well spent. In that way it is closely linked to the monitoring of capital development projects (under item 1) and enhanced by citizen journalists using social media and radio to keep duty bearers and citizens aware of what goes on in the communities (under item 3). We will also link up with other CSOs and coalitions to promote a transparent, just and progressive tax system in Ghana.

### 3) Youth in governance and citizen journalism

Youth constitute a large share of the population in Ghana and this poses both a challenge and a possibility to the country. GV and YEfL have worked with youth empowerment for a number of years to raise the low position granted to young people in the social hierarchy and give them the confidence to break free of their political marginalization. We believe that young people need to be involved in decision-making to make sure that policies and programs address young people’s needs and take advantage of their resources. Youth will be supported to organize themselves through youth centres and the creation of platforms for dialogue and political engage­ment. The Youth parliament concept is showing good results as a way of engaging young people in political issues and sharpen their debating skills. This will facilitate the constructive participation of youth in local and national elections, where they often risk being manipulated. Based on the experiences from the Youth Speak Up project, the capacity of youth will be built to function as community journalists able to voice their concerns and address local injustices; and strategic links will be established with media houses, bloggers and influencers in both North and South Ghana.

### 4) Civil society fighting corruption

Corruption has emerged as one of the most burning issues in Ghana, as people are becoming aware of its devastating effects; and it is one of the main reasons that national programs intended to benefit the North, such as SADA[[5]](#footnote-5), have largely failed. If corruption is not addressed, it is unlikely that Ghana will be able to sustain the positive developments and deliver quality basic services to all parts of the country. GV and its partners will inform rural communities on national policies and programs, so that they understand their rights and are able to identify misuse of funds. We will intensify collaboration with national move­ments and coalitions such as the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) and the Citizen’s Movement against Corruption (CMaC) to campaign and bring evidence of corruption from the North to the national level. Citizen journalism (under item 3) will be used as a powerful tool to shed light on local cases of mismanagement and corruption e.g. collapsing bridges and ghost projects, and demand accountability and action.

## Education

Education is widely recognized as a main driver of development with a key role in achieving the other SDGs. SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education encompasses the change GV and partners aim to contribute to. The program will specifically focus on targets 4.1 ‘Universal primary and secondary education’, 4.5 ‘Gender equality and inclusion’, and 4.6 ‘Universal youth literacy’. As captured in the section on inclusive growth and employment, the program also addresses target 4.4 on relevant skills for decent work, targeting youth and adults.

There is still around 0.5 million children mainly in Northern Ghana who are hard to reach and therefore without access to basic education. There is a huge issue of inequalitydue to fewer resourcesto education in Northern Ghana, especially rural areas, although there are policies and legal frameworks that could help bridge the gap if implemented. This leads to poor learning outcomes; and so do educational methods characterized by teacher centred rote learning that do not prepare children and youth for active citizenry in a fast changing world. **The desired change is that all children access quality education to achieve positive learning outcomes, in order to pave the way for more inclusive and sustainable human development**. With main focus on the most deprived parts of Ghana this calls for special efforts, addressing access, quality and equity. Some progress has been seen in recent years, especially through cooperation between govern­ment structures and civil society. There is still a long way before government fulfils the rights to quality education of marginalised children and youth; and there is a strong role for civil society to press for these rights and demonstrate ways of fulfilling them in challenging contexts.

The objective pursued in the area of education is:

**Citizens and Civil Society Organisations address inequalities to improve the use and distribution of resources in education**

The program’s point of departure is civil society; and experience shows that education is a strong and unifying concern across targeted communities. The adoption of the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) policy[[6]](#footnote-6) and its national roll-out has been a key achievement; and pressing for government implementation of this policy remains relevant. Based on developments in the education sector and lessons learned, there will be a strong focus on accountable, equitable and effective use of education resources to bridge the North-South and rural-urban gaps.

The expected outcomes are:

1. An increasing number of hard-to-reach children are in school
2. Education governance is strengthened, leading to more effective and efficient use of resources.
3. More girls and young women progress in the education system, and have relevant skills for empowerment and employment
4. GV and partners contribute to civil society pressure for effective implementation of SDG 4 through alliances and networks at regional, national and international level
5. Education models and approaches are developed and promoted to strengthen learning outcomes

Based on lessons learned and knowledge of the context, the program will pursue the education objective with point of departure in four strategic choices: 1) Fair and transparent allocation of education resources, 2) Effective use of education resources 3) Methodologies for improved learning outcomes, and 4) Better opportunities for girls and young women.

### 1. Fair and transparent allocation of education resources

Without measures catering for hard to reach children and deprived communities it will not be possible to bridge the significant inequality. Pro-poor policies and programs include the CBE policy and the Inclusive Education Policy with main emphasis on children excluded due to geographical location, poverty and gender. Their implementation is, however, lagging far behind, and the program will engage in advocacy at national and regional levels to press for more effective implementation, a fairer distribution of teachers, and better facilities for teachers in rural environ­ments. The program will seek to involve a wider section of stakeholders, e.g. teachers’ unions as well as think tanks and institutions that share the concerns. We will select partners and channels to present a strong voice nationally and internationally in promoting SDG 4 with its demand for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. At district and regional level the program will work with civil society groups to address urban/rural inequality and influence opinion leaders, parents etc. to fulfil the children’s right to education and to join the fight for fairer resource allocation.

### 2. effective use of education resources

Effective use of education resources depends on well-functioning governance structures where duty bearers are able to manage funds as well as human and other resources; and civil society holds them accountable. There is an elaborate governance structure from the individual school through district, regional and national level, but in practice governance is often non-transparent and ineffective due to low capacity of the stakeholders. E4L capacity building is resulting in real improvements at targeted schools, and this will inform the future strategy for networking Parent Teacher Associations and developing their capacity to hold duty bearers accountable. Approaches to education resource tracking will be explored and tested to identify effective methods. As an innovation, pupils will be involved in school governance through e.g. child parliaments with inspiration and support from youth parliaments. Pupil represen­tation on School Management Committees will be facilitated to develop skills in democratic participation. At regional and national level, the program will link up with other key actors to coordinate civil society action on use of education resources, with National Education Sector Reviews as an important platform. The program will link up with Northern Network for Education Development as a nationally accepted representative of education stakeholders in Northern Ghana, and with Accra based organisations with access to decision-makers and powerful channels of influencing.

### 3. Methodologies for Improved learning outcomes

School for Life has extensive experience with pupil-centred learning methods and facilitating positive teacher-pupil relations. For these to be adopted and embedded in the formal school, not least in deprived areas, they should be demanded by the rights-holders in education (children and parents), recognized by the duty bearers (education authorities) and mastered by the teachers. Based on lessons learned, the program will explore conducive learning methodologies and environ­­ments suitable to the relevant context and promote these through awareness raising and training.

### 4. Better opportunities for girls and young women

In recent years the program has increased its strategic focus on supporting girls to stay in school longer and progress to higher levels of education, which requires other strategies than promoting their access to school. New approaches are being tried that involve e.g. opinion leaders, role models, the girls themselves, school governance bodies and media. As lessons are learned, the approaches will be adjusted and documented. In order to improve opportunities for young illiterate women without skills to pursue income generation or make their voices heard, the program will build their capacity through literacy and numeracy classes. These will include civic education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and other life skills. It may be a stepping-stone for entrepreneurship training, community journalism or other program activities where it has been difficult to include young women due to illiteracy. It may also be combined with counselling for other career paths or re-entering school. This is piloted on small scale in 2019; and the aim is to develop a model for sharing with partners that wish to empower girls and young women.

## Inclusive growth and employment

Sustainable economic development and inclusive growth are of overriding significance to the population of Northern Ghana. The rural Northern Savannah Ecological Zone has the highest poverty rates and it is worsening. Climate change affects agricultural production and livelihoods negatively and the impact is predicted to increase rapidly in the near future. Farmers largely depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and have few strategies for diversifying their income and business. The small-scale farmers lack capacity, finance and volume to start viable businesses and take part in the existing value chains. Access to decent work and employment is a major challenge to especially youth and women, who also have limited access to productive resources; and national programs tend to leave out the rural poor in practice even if accommodated for on paper.

To contribute to the overall goal of promoting sustainable development in Northern Ghana, **the desired change is to promote inclusive growth and support employment opportunities particularly for women and youth**. Improved livelihood has value in itself, but in our experience it is also a factor in facilitating engagement in civil society and participation in democratic processes. The program will strengthen its focus on contributing to new and innovative ways of securing better structures and opportunities for the rural population of Northern Ghana from a civil society angle and within the SDG framework. We continue to pursue SDG 2 to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture and food security, as it is a foundation for the development of the rural poor. SDG 13 on climate change also plays an important role, especially target 13.1 on strengthened resilience and adaptive capacity. We will work to create an entrepreneurial, business-oriented environment in rural areas in Northern Ghana in line with SDG 8 to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

The immediate objective for inclusive growth and employment is:

**Rural communities, in particular women and youth, use growth opportunities and resilience strategies to improve their livelihoods.**

The expected outcomes are:

1. Small-scale farmers apply effective and climate adaptive farming methodologies and use a range of livelihood strategies to diversify and improve livelihoods
2. Farmer groups and associations have capacity to develop farming business and improve their livelihoods
3. Youth and women start up and sustain their own businesses and improve their livelihoods and employment
4. Partners collaborate with civil society, state and business actors on improving the frame conditions for inclusive growth and employment opportunities in Northern Ghana

Sustainable economic development, inclusive growth, and employment are development areas that are highly regulated by policy frameworks and economic forces, but we see an opportunity for supporting civil society to contribute to this within three focus areas in line with recommendations from the Human Development Report for Northern Ghana: 1) Livelihood strategies and climate change adaptation, 2) Business development and economic growth, and 3) Youth and women entrepreneurs.

### Livelihood strategies and climate change adaptation

We will build on our partners work with small-scale farmers through groups, associations and cooperatives. CLIP has established itself as a key civil society player in the area of food security & livelihoods with strong links to stakeholders and gaining a foothold at national level. As a new initiative, the program will adopt a “whole-year-cycle approach” that takes a holistic view of farmers’ livelihoods. The program will build the capacity of small-scale farmers in effective farming methodologies through e.g. Farmer Field Schools and access to extension services. The farmers need strategies to diversify their income; and the program will support them to engage in other activities, such as off-season business. It is essential that the farmers have knowledge on climate change adaptation to be able to mitigate the negative impact on their livelihoods. The program will work to build the farmers’ knowledge of better agronomical practices and introduce new farming methods such as greenhouse farming. Vulnerable households need to have a number of resilience strategies to mitigate shocks, and the program will continue to support the formation of Village Savings and Loans Associations to give them access to finance locally on their own conditions. Further, the program will increasingly support farmer networks, movements and other stakeholders in advocating for improvements in frame conditions, government services and market access. At international level the PAMOBARMA project will be one of the platforms for this.

### 2. business development and economic growth

With the business development intervention, the program seeks to support existing farmer groups, associations and cooperatives to start up profitable and competitive businesses. GV and partners are developing and piloting a new model for business development. This is done in collaboration with a Danish/ Ghanaian consultancy company that works with farmers, agribusiness and value chains. The first pilot with approx. 4-5 farmer groups will take place in 2019, and the lessons will inform any redesign of the model before roll out to more groups in 2020-2023.The model targets well-organized farmer groups and associations who already have a business idea or small-scale business in Northern Ghana. The program will support the possible businesses in assessing their potential; in developing their business case and incentive models, and in accessing finance from local institutions; and it will mentor them in their first year of operation to ensure they have the needed capacity. This approach is new to GV and its partners – and to many CSOs – and the model will be documented, and a manual will be developed that can be shared with relevant stakeholders.

### 3. youth and women entrepreneurs

The objective for the program’s entrepreneurship intervention is for youth and women to become entrepreneurial individuals who start up and sustain their own businesses, and create a supportive rural entrepreneurial environment. This is done through multiple complementing strategies. Youth between 18-30 years will be selected through the district youth centres and go through an entrepreneur­ship model that has been developed and refined over the last years. The model has showed good results with about 80% of the young entrepreneurs starting up business that they are able to sustain and also employ other people. The youth will also be supported to start up VSLAs to ensure they have funds for starting and sustaining their business.

To nurture an entrepreneurial and supportive environment in rural areas the new program will develop and start up hubs and mentor networks that will be linked to the existing youth centres in collaboration with other stakeholders. The networks and hubs will also play a role in advocating for improved services and programs aimed at including rural youth in Government entrepreneur­ship initiatives. Furthermore, a new model will be tested and developed to transform the youth centres into sustainable self-run social enterprises from 2020. YEfL has played an active role in giving inputs to the National Youth Authority and its policies and programs and will continue to do so, and will also monitor the implementation of the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan (NEIP) and the Ghana Youth Employment program as one of the most influential youth organisations from the North.

## 8. Target Groups

The 240 civil society groups that we have worked with in 5 districts in Northern Region have attained capacity to collaborate and network with other groups. This facilitates stronger civil society representation, and these networked groups will be at the core of local activities in the new program, reducing focus on individual groups. The networks are e.g. Parent and Teacher Associations, Youth Centres, farmer associations, and women cooperatives. New groups include trade associations and community monitoring networks.

The present program has youth as a separate thematic area, whereas the new program will include youth across all three strategic intervention areas to address age-based inequality. More than one third of Ghana’s population are youth between 15 and 35. They are marginalized especially in rural areas because they are often poorly educated, lack opportunities of employment and are excluded from influence. So far the program has mainly worked with existing youth groups but the new program will target a larger number of youth, including unorganised youth between 15 and 25, to strengthen their opportunities for influence and ability to be productive. The district Youth Centres will bring together youth activities within all three strategic intervention areas, e.g. improving business and employment opportunities, developing literacy and livelihood skills, and facilitating opportunities for youth participation in governance.

Girls and women are also marginalized in the traditional culture, which impacts on their level of education, access to resources, workload, and decision-making at all levels. They will therefore be a key target group across all the strategic intervention areas in order to fight gender-based inequality. Over the years we have gained experience with the challenges of changing engrained socio-cultural issues, which is a process that requires strategic involvement of the women and girls themselves as well as power holders in the family, the community, institutions etc. The new program will draw on this experience to strengthen girls’ and women’s opportunities as described under the strategic intervention areas in section 7.

Children of school going age are a key target group due to the significant equality gap and poor educational standards in deprived areas. Interventions will target children, parents, schools and authorities in the 5 districts, as well as national stakeholders in order to improve frame conditions and promote equal opportunities for quality education.

Key stakeholders among the secondary target group will be MMDAs; Traditional Authorities and religious leaders; ministries, departments and agencies, e.g. the Ministry for Local Government and Rural Development, National Youth Authority (NYA); and media (radio, print and electronic).

## 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E is a key priority to GV and partners, and many resources have been spent on developing, implementing and adjusting an outcome based monitoring system over the last 3-4 years[[7]](#footnote-7). Program staff at all levels are involved in the monitoring of both outputs and outcomes. This is supported and overseen by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research team and GV program coordinators. Further­more, there are several learning and coordination platforms such as the quarterly Program Coordination Committee meetings, annual learn and share and use of digital platforms, which will be maintained. The system is well-functioning, and there is no need to develop an entirely new one. However, the system will be revised in collaboration with the partners and new approaches will be included if necessary. The monitoring system will take its point of departure in the overall ToC and the objectives and outcomes derived from this.

GV and partners will continue to use monitoring methods that especially cater for changes at outcome level. These are Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) where data will be gathered through yearly quantitative and qualitative surveys, and a continuous collection of outcomes using the outcome harvesting method. In addition to these outcome-focused methods, the program has systems and formats for output monitoring that will be used at program level. Gender is an integral and cross­cutting part of the program and the TOC and the KLOE will have expected outcomes on gender. Preconditions, assumptions and risks will be monitored systematically in connection with semi-annual and annual reporting, and their status and relevance will be assessed with GV at least annually during GV monitoring visits. The identified risks will be carefully considered in designing the intervention, and the risk management systems will cater for assessment and mitigation.

Advocacy goals and strategies for the partners’ work at national and international level will continue to be monitored and reviewed regularly. The system and tools will be further developed to cater for the increased focus on national advocacy activities with multiple and possibly shifting partners and actors to monitor and ensure that other partners provide the M&E department with the relevant input.

10. Intended program management structure, including the added value of the Danish organisation

The program will continue to have a small core team, with the GDCA Executive Director as the Program Manager and four technical officers covering the areas of organisational development and capacity building; communication and media; M&E, research and documentation; and finance controlling and coordination. The partners have technical advisers in the areas of advocacy, communication and youth (YEfL), policy and governance (GDCA), quality education, advocacy and gender (SfL) and food security & livelihoods (CLIP).

The Program Manager is supported by five teams, which bring together the technical officers and technical advisers. The team approach has proved effective as it strengthens communication and learning between functions and organisations, bringing synergy and enhanced commitment. The teams are:

* Program management and coordination team
* Advocacy, communications & research team
* Monitoring, evaluation and reporting team
* Finance and administration team
* Gender team

The Management Committee (MC) consists of the Program Manager/ GDCA Executive Director, the SfL Manager, YEfL Manager, and CLIP Manager. The MC is overall responsible for issues related to management, including HR, strategy and implementation. The GV secretariat is in close contact with the MC on implementation issues and facilitates processes related to management and strategy as required. In terms of coordination at policy level, the partners will continue to have an annual summit meeting, the Program Strategic Committee (PSC), made up of board represen­tatives from GV and the local partners. It serves as a strategic platform with the objective of jointly assessing the cooperation and the overall progress of the program, and ensuring synergy between the local partners and GV.

Ghana Friends’ comparative advantages in terms of adding value relates to the close and long lasting links with our partners, dedicated volunteers and staff with a deep know­ledge of Ghana, and skills, competencies and networks in relevant areas. Partners mention easy access to honest consultation as one of the most appreciated features of the partnership and single out the relationship as having beneficial characteristics reaching beyond what they have with other develop­ment partners. The continuous exchange of perspectives also brings the opportunity for seeking inspiration from and mirroring Danish organisational values and practices in terms of constituency building and democratic governance. The relation to GDCA and YEfL has been a good point of departure for adding value to their organisational development and supporting them to be strong civil society organizations. Over the years GV staff and volunteers have supported in areas such as strategy development, built capacity in HR and administrative & financial systems. GVs assistance in recent years has been designed and monitored on the basis of a comprehen­sive organizational assessment carried out in 2013. This will be repeated early 2019 to assess progress and form the basis for updating capacity development plans.

Further, GV keeps abreast with innova­tions and opportunities through continuous contact with networks, strategic partners and other relevant sources to identify areas relevant to GV and partners. One of the areas where GV has added value to the partnership is the development of models, such as the Entrepreneurship Boot Camp model that was developed in a co-creative process between YEfL, GV and VIA University College. The experience is that well defined and tested models such as these give our partners a competitive advantage in terms of funding from other donors and a stronger voice in advocacy. GV has also supported the partners to enter into new partnerships, such as the collaboration with Acting for Life that has resulted in additional income as well as expansion into new areas.

## 11. Preliminary timetable

GV will consult with the partners on recommendations from the review/appraisal when finalising the concept note. The application will be developed together with the partners involving a face-to-face session around May/June and online cooperation thereafter. Further contextual analyses and learning from the existing ToC will inform the elaboration of the ToC for the new program.

## 12. Budget summary



1. The Northern Savannah Ecological Zone also includes part of the Brong Ahafo and the Volta region, which has very similar characteristics to the Northern regions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. PAMOBARMA is a continuation of the PARSAO project focused on building resilience of agro-pastoral systems in 7 countries in West Africa. GV and its partners collaborate with the French NGO, Acting for Life, on implementing the project in Ghana. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. As evidenced by the ‘District League Table’ jointly produced by UNICEF and CDD Ghana [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies is the highest level in the decentralized structure. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Savannah Accelerated Development Agency was a major development program intended to benefit the North [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The CBE policy is based on a functional literacy model developed by GV and School for Life. It provides a bridge into the formal education system for out of school children and has been implemented by several international donors, most recently in a 5-year public private partnership funded by DFID and USAID. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See CISU monitoring report from December 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)