



# STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION IN GHANA'S NORTHERN BORDER ZONES

A Strategic overview of Progress and Impact of SOCO Project







**HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA**  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA



Message From

**HON. AHMED IBRAHIM**

**SECTOR MINISTER, MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, CHIEFTAINCY AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

I bring warm greetings on behalf of His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, and on behalf of the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, as we gather for this year's Regional Conference of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SOCO) Project here in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Regional Forum held in February 2025 in Benin provided valuable insights that have greatly influenced Ghana's strategy to enhance social cohesion and resilience in our northern and border districts. The discussions in Benin highlighted the challenges faced by fragile border communities—rising climate shocks, competition over natural resources, livelihood insecurity, and the ongoing threat of violent extremist spillover.

A central lesson was unmistakable: our challenges do not respect borders, and therefore our solutions must also transcend borders. The forum highlighted the importance of harmonising regional strategies to address insecurity, climate pressures, and fragility in

border zones. It also reaffirmed the indispensable role of women and youth in local governance and peacebuilding, demonstrating that inclusive development is inseparable from sustainable peace.

Women's groups shared compelling evidence of how economic empowerment enhances their influence in conflict prevention, local decision-making, and community stability. Youth networks showcased how sports, digital innovation, civic engagement, and cultural exchanges are transforming young people into key partners in reducing vulnerability to extremist recruitment. These experiences remind us that the meaningful inclusion of women and youth is not optional; it is foundational to lasting peace and development.

In Ghana, the SOCO Project operationalises these lessons. It is a practical response to the complex pressures confronting our northern regions and border communities. Through its community-driven development approach, SOCO strengthens service delivery, expands economic opportunities, and builds trust between communities and local governance structures. This participatory methodology ensures that interventions reflect local priorities and are owned by local authorities, traditional leaders, women's associations, youth groups, and civil society organisations.

Since its inception, SOCO has reached an estimated 1.5 million Ghanaians across **48** districts and approximately **1,700** communities. Our investments in climate-resilient infrastructure—schools, health facilities, market structures, boreholes, small dams, and sanitation systems—have improved daily living conditions and enhanced human security in vulnerable areas.

Livelihood support remains central to promoting stability. More than **20,000** women have benefitted from enterprise

grants, skills development, and local economic empowerment initiatives. These interventions have strengthened household resilience and positioned women as key agents of community stability. At the same time, youth-focused activities—sports tournaments, leadership training, digital innovation programmes, and structured community dialogues—are shifting young people from the margins to the centre of local development and peacebuilding.

As we convene in Côte d'Ivoire, we do so with high expectations. We anticipate that this meeting will deepen our shared understanding of regional risks, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and generate practical solutions grounded in local realities. We look forward to renewed commitments that advance the principle of thinking regionally and acting locally—building cross-border solidarity while ensuring that communities remain at the centre of decision-making and action.

The Government of Ghana remains firmly committed to ensuring that our border communities are not isolated but fully supported to thrive. We recognise the potential of the SOCO Project to reduce the rural-urban divide by improving access to basic services, expanding economic opportunities, and fostering secure environments. This is essential not only for development but also for strengthening community resilience against the growing risks of violent extremist activities across the sub-region.

It is my hope that this forum will strengthen partnerships, inspire innovative approaches, and reinforce our collective resolve to build a peaceful, prosperous, and resilient Gulf of Guinea region.

**Thank you.**



**HON. RITA NAA IDOKEY-SOWAH**  
DEPUTY MINISTER, MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT,  
CHIEFTAINCY AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS



**MR. AMIN ABDUL-RAHAMAN**  
CHIEF DIRECTOR, MINISTEY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT,  
CHIEFTAINCY AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS



# SOCO PROJECT @ A GLANCE



## Project Overview

The Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SOCO) Project is a five-year programme designed to strengthen climate and socioeconomic resilience in border-zone communities across six northern regions of Ghana. The project promotes regional collaboration, local development, and community cohesion.

## Project Development Objective

To improve regional collaboration and the socioeconomic and climate resilience of border zone communities in the target northern regions of the Gulf of Guinea countries exposed to conflict and climate risks.

## Financing

US\$150 million

## Implementation Agency

Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs

## Duration

Five years (March 2022–March 2027)

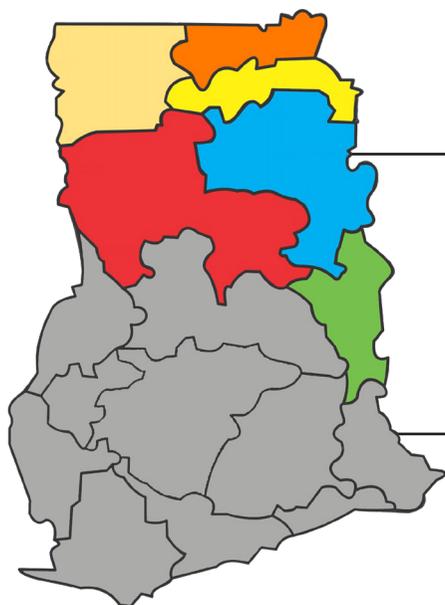
## Project Launch

November 25, 2022

## Disbursement Status

US\$60 million (40 percent) disbursed





## METROPOLITAN, MUNICIPAL, AND DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES (MMDAs) COVERED BY THE GHANA SOCO PROJECT

### UPPER WEST REGION

1. Lawra Municipal
2. Nandom Municipal
3. Sissala East Municipal
4. Wa West District
5. Wa East District
6. Lambussie District
7. Jirapa Municipal
8. Daffiama Bussie Issa District
9. Wa Municipal
10. Nadowli Kaleo District
11. Sissala West District

### UPPER EAST REGION

1. Bawku Municipal
2. Pusiga District
3. Binduri District
4. Bolgatanga Municipal
5. Bongo District
6. Tempene District
7. Garu District
8. Kassena Nankana East Municipal
9. Kassena Nankana West District
10. Talensi District
11. Bolgatanga East District
12. Bawku West District
13. Nabdam District
14. Builsa South District
15. Builsa North Municipal

### NORTH EAST REGION

1. Bunkpurugu Nyankpanduri District
2. Yunyoo-Nasuan District
3. East Mamprusi Municipal
4. West Mamprusi Municipal
5. Mamprugu Moagduri District
6. Chereponi District

### SAVANNAH REGION

1. Sawla Tuna Kalba District
2. North Gonja District
3. Bole District
4. North East Gonja District

### NORTHERN REGION

1. Sagnerigu Municipal
2. Tamale Metropolitan
3. Tatale Sanguli District
4. Karaga District
5. Saboba District
6. Yendi Municipal
7. Nanumba North Municipal
8. Gushiegu Municipal

### OTI REGION

1. Krachi East Municipal
2. Krachi West Municipal
3. Nkwanta North District
4. Nkwanta South Municipal

# PROJECT COMPONENTS

## 1: Investing in community Resiliency and Inclusion

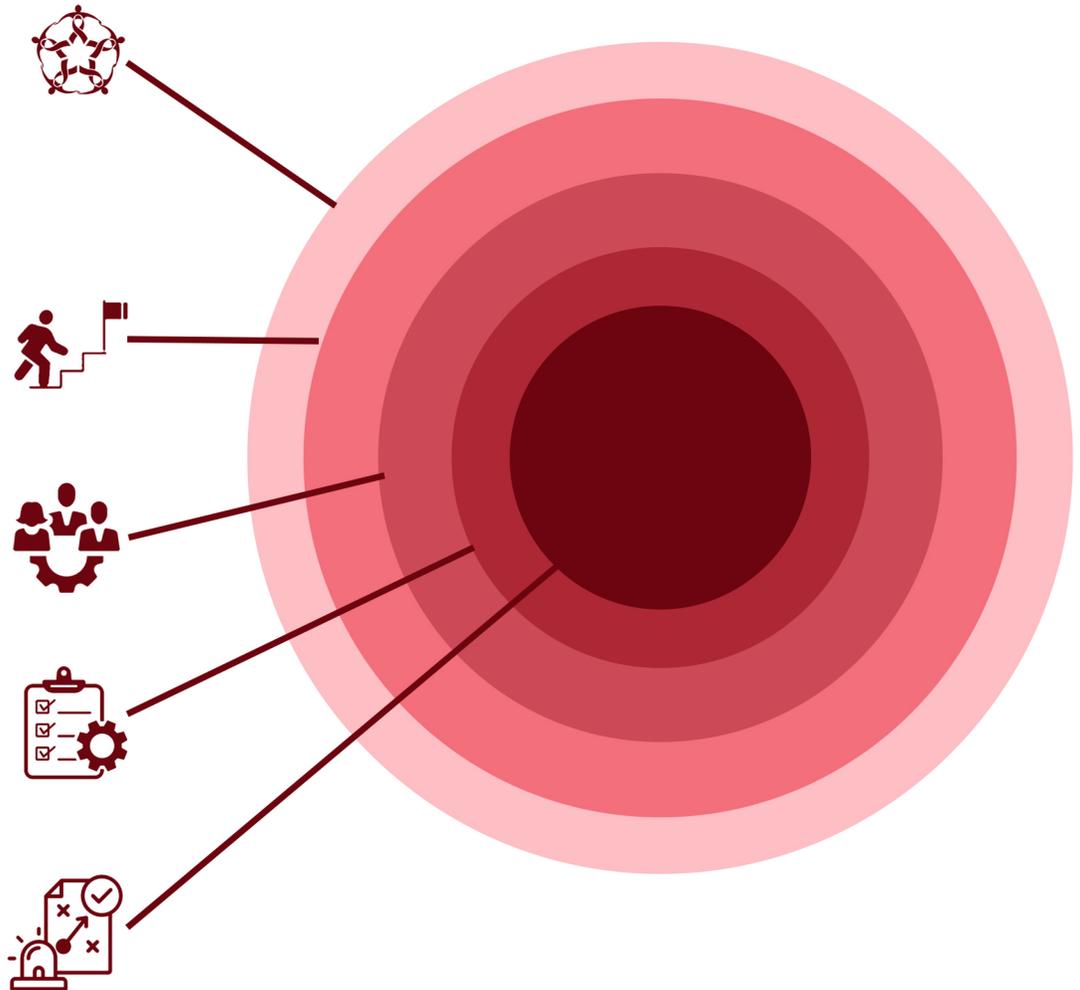
- Sub component 1.1: Community investments for strengthening local resilience and inclusion.
- Sub component 1.2: Strategic economic activity investments for local economic development.
- Sub component 1.3: Youth engagement and social cohesion.

## 2: Building Foundation and Capacity for Inclusive and Resilient Communities Component

## 3: Regional Coordination Platform and Dialogue Component

## 4: Project Management Component

## 5: Contingent Emergency Response



# PROJECT FOCUS



## RESILIENCE:

Climate-responsive and community-driven solutions



## LIVELIHOODS:

Support to women, youth and vulnerable groups



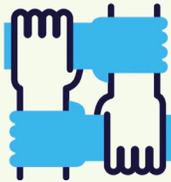
## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

Platforms for participation, skills and cohesion



## INFRASTRUCTURE:

Basic services including health, water, education, transport



## SOCIAL COHESION:

Trust-building, inclusion, and community dialogue

# COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT (CDD) APPROACH IN ACTION

*Empowering communities to take decisions on their development priorities. Local government agencies provide technical assistance to enhance delivery of climate resilient infrastructure.*

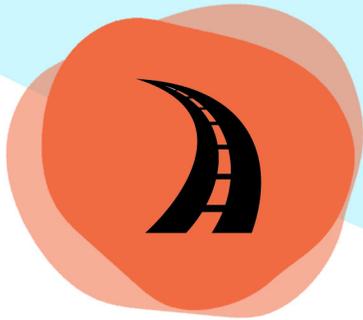


Community-Driven Development (CDD) under SOCO project places people first and at the centre of the development process, ensuring that every voice—especially the vulnerable and those often unheard—shapes decisions that affect their lives. It creates safe, inclusive spaces where communities identify their own priorities, lead their own solutions, and hold one another accountable.

By empowering women, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable households to participate meaningfully. The CDD strengthens social cohesion, builds trust between citizens and institutions, and nurtures a shared sense of ownership. The result is not just relevant project prioritised and completed, but communities transformed to be more resilient, more united, and more confident in their collective power to drive lasting change.

# COMPLETED SUB PROJECTS

Infrastructure – (Thematic Breakdown)



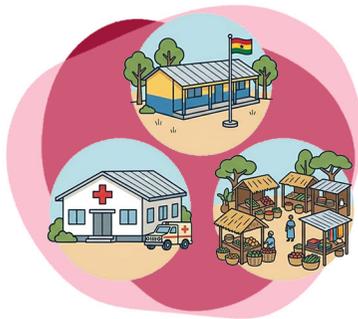
Connectivity  
**72**



Energy and ICT  
**14**



Natural Resources  
and Climate Adaptation  
**11**

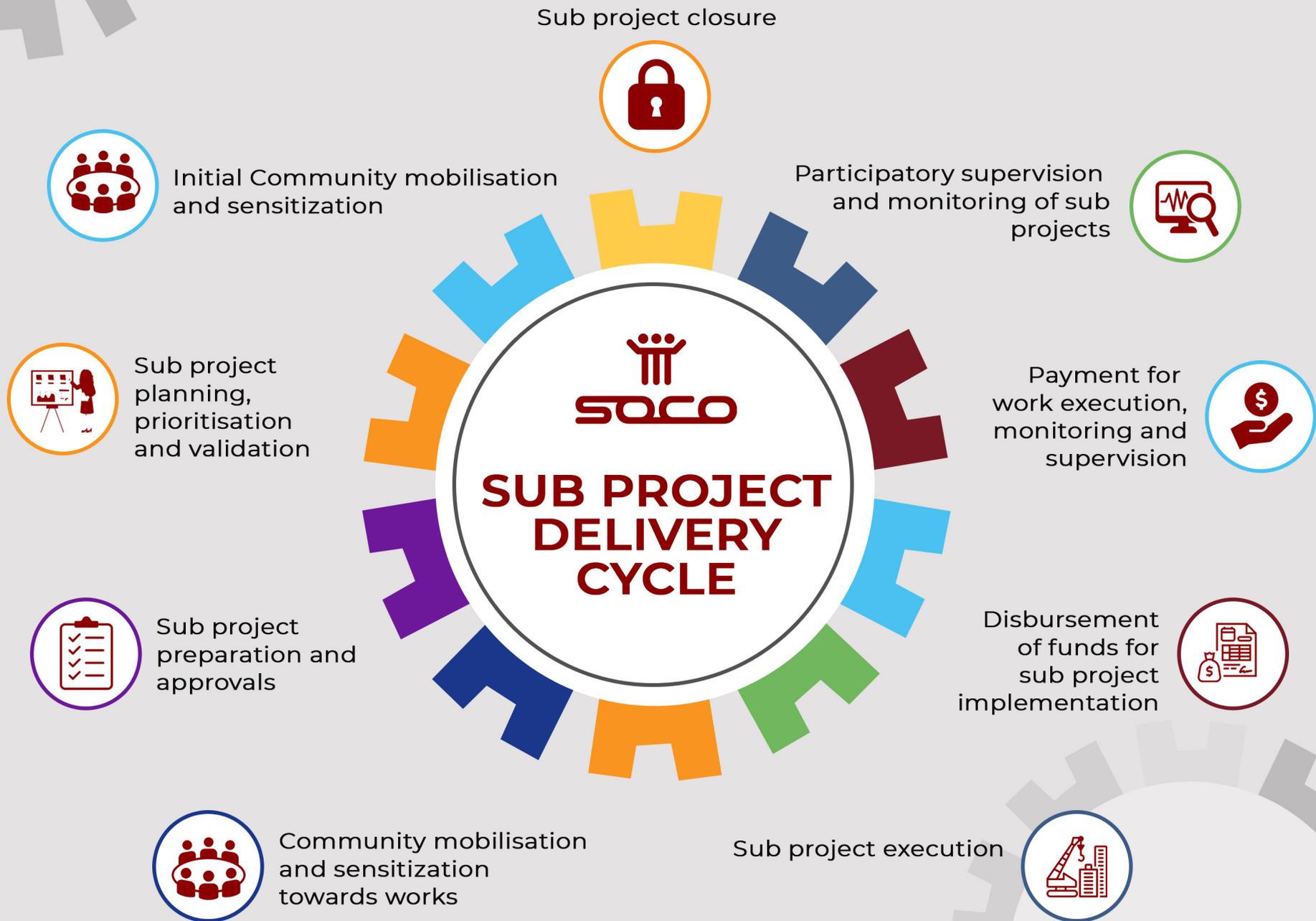


Social Infrastructure  
**437**



Water, Sanitation and  
Hygiene (WASH)  
**416**

**TOTAL 950**



# WHY SOCO MATTERS

## **Border-Zone Fragility**

Communities along Ghana's northern borders face persistent risks linked to spillover tensions, weak security conditions, and limited cross-border coordination.

## **Climate Vulnerability**

Erratic rainfall, flooding, droughts, and land degradation continue to disrupt livelihoods and intensify household fragility.

## **Limited Infrastructure & Social Services**

Access to essential services - health, water, education, markets, and safe roads—remains inadequate across many districts, constraining opportunities for growth.

## **Youth Unemployment & Inter-Community Tensions**

High youth unemployment rates contribute to frustration, migration pressures, and susceptibility to negative influences, while long-standing local tensions weaken cohesion.

## **North-South Development Disparities**

Significant gaps in poverty levels, service delivery, and human development indicators create structural inequalities that leave northern communities more vulnerable.



# THREE YEARS OF SOCO IMPACT

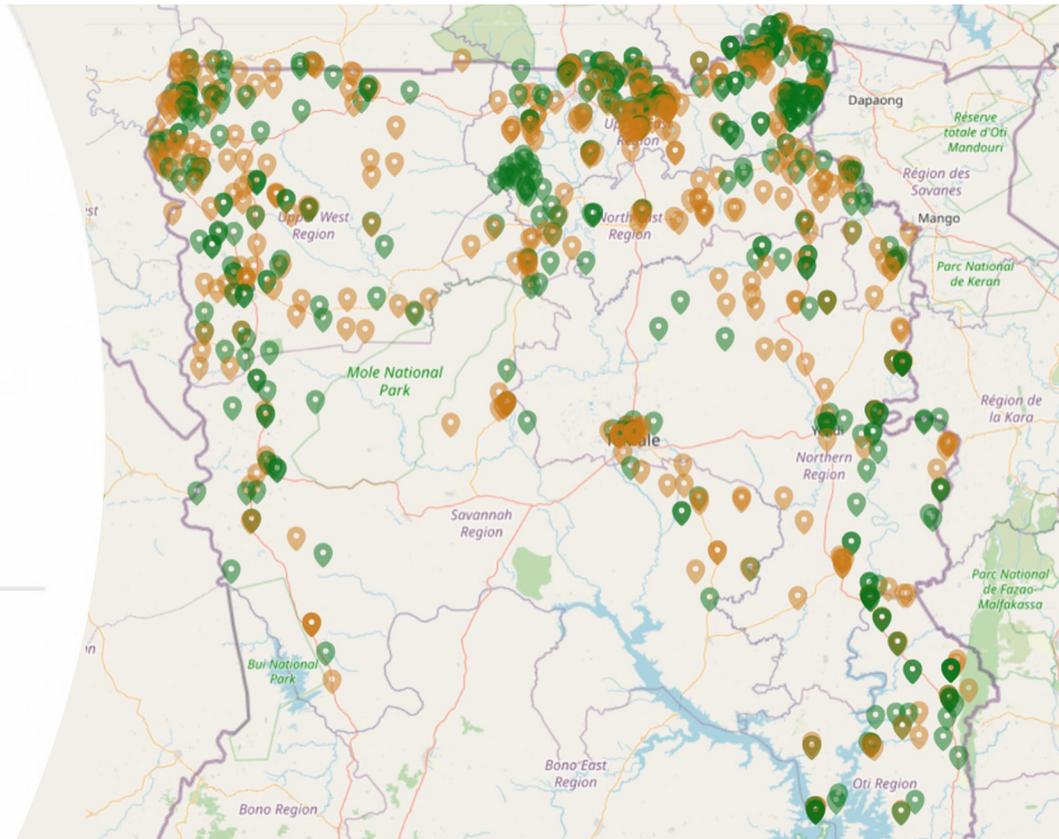
# SOCO IN GHANA, WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED SO FAR

## National Footprint Map

This map provides a clear visual overview of the SOCO project's geographic reach. It highlights all six northern regions, the forty-eight (48) participating districts and the one thousand seven hundred (1,700) communities that make up the project clusters. The visual helps readers appreciate the full scale of SOCO's coverage and understand where the project is delivering impact across the northern zone.

Access to  
basic  
infrastructure  
and services  
mapping

■ - 2023  
■ - 2024

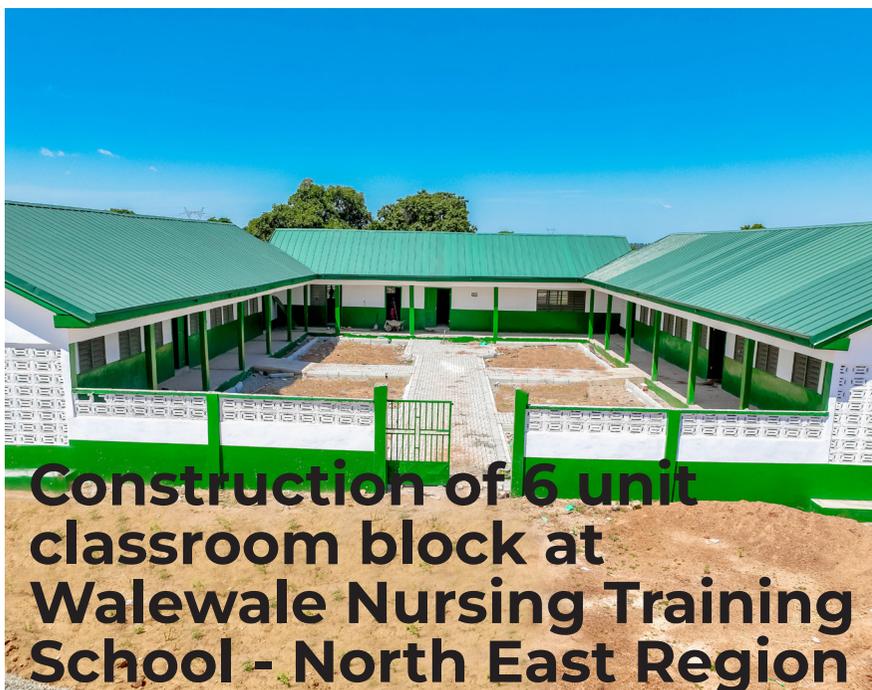


# EDUCATION

- **36,656** people benefitting from more inclusive education facilities.
- This was achieved through **130** completed education facilities including classrooms, teachers' quarters, and libraries



## Construction of 3 unit classroom block at Gbintiri - North East Region



# Construction of 2-Units Classroom Block at Chansa, Wa Municipal Assembly



# Construction of 3-unit classroom block at Tokoroano, Krachi East MA in Oti Region.



# HEALTH

- **632,000** people benefitting from access to health facilities.
- This was achieved through **94** completed health facilities including CHPS compounds, clinics, and laboratories



Construction of Danko CHPS Compound

# Construction and equipping of Maternity theatre at Dambai, Oti



# Extension of Maternal Block and Supplies of Medical Equipment at Doba (Nandom Municipal Assembly)



# Construction of Institutional Toilet at Kanvili, Sagnarigu MA, Northern Region



**Construction of Nurses  
Quarters at Zambo Badi,  
Lawra Municipal assembly.**



**Construction of Yazori CHPS  
Compound, North Gonja District**



## **Construction of Yaro CHPS Compound, Wa East municipal**



## **Construction of Nurses Quarters at Nadowli, Nadowli Kaleo District Assembly**



# ROADS

- **71,747** people benefitting from improved access to transport infrastructure and services.
- This was achieved through **72** completed road and culvert facilities.



Construction of culvert and gravel road





**Improvement of Loho  
Junction Nabuku Feeder Road  
(1.8km), Nadowli Kaleo District.**

# Construction of Culvert at Bechamboi, Sissala East Municipal Assembly



## Construction of Tanchara culvert, Lawra Municipal Assembly



# MARKETS

- **465,581** people benefitting from access to project built and rehabilitated markets and related infrastructure.
- This was achieved through **108** completed markets and related facilities.

## Construction of Market Stalls at Sheini, Tatale Sanguli DA, Northern Region



# Construction of market stores at Bunkpurugu Nakpanduri



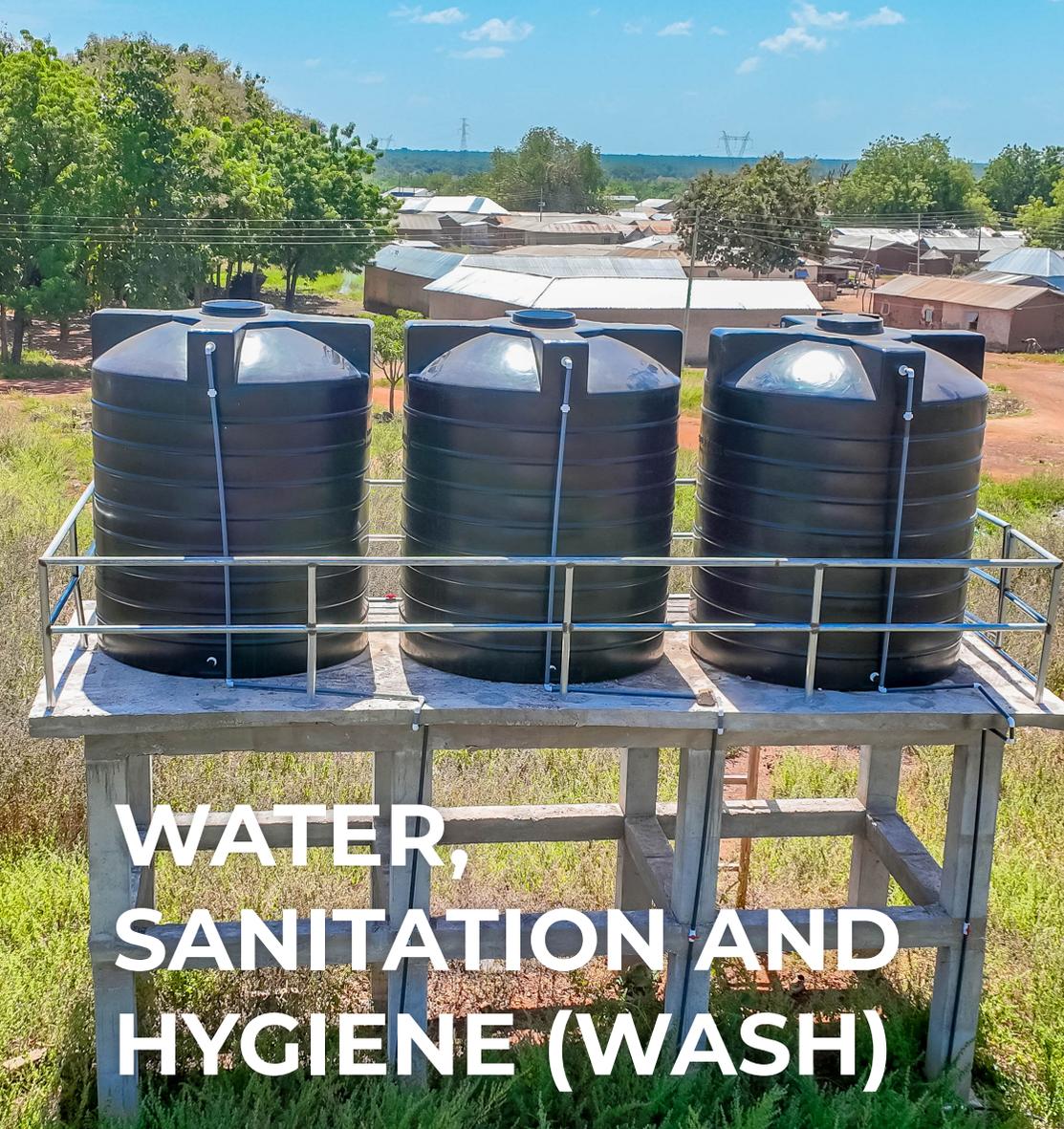
## Construction of Market Stalls, Sissala West District





## **Construction of Market stalls at Sawla, Sawla Tuna Kalba District**

## Rehabilitation of reservoir at Bunkpurugu District



# WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

- **171,800** people benefitting from access to basic drinking water, sanitation services, and hygiene.
- This was achieved through **416** completed water facilities, including boreholes and mechanised systems





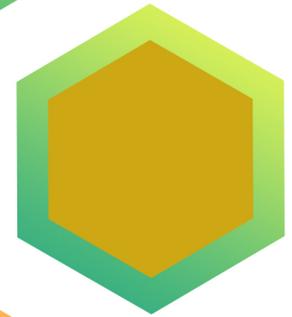
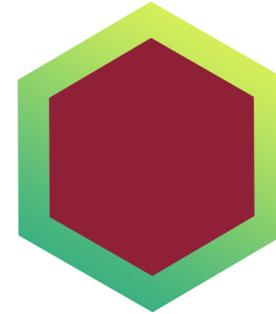
## Construction of Hand Pump at Taayag, Nandom Municipal

# Construction of Chansa Small Earth Dam at Wa Municipal





**33,600** women provided with access to digital financial accounts and services



This is achieved through opening of mobile money and bank accounts for **42,000** beneficiaries of Common Interest Groups (CIGs) activities. **80%** of them being women.

# DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION

# LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

- **46,280** people benefitting from livelihoods support.
- This was achieved through supports to **24,652** livelihood groups and **21,628** CIGs to expand their business activities. **84%** of beneficiaries are women.



**Timukii Gari Processing VSLA at Kpassa, Nkwanta North DA, Oti Region**

# Kpassa Bread Bakers Association



# Dambai Vegetable Farmers Association



## Litafason Gari Processing Group, Kpassa



# Sheep rearing by Harifarm VSLA Group at Kpassa, Nk- wanta North DA, Oti Region





Cultural



Sports



Youth Parliament

# Youth Engagement and Social Cohesion

**207** youth engagement initiatives delivered through sports events, cultural festivals, and youth parliament activities.



**Inter Cluster Games at Yendi M.A, Northern Region**



**Inter Community Dance Festival**

## Yendi Youth Parliament in Session, Yendi MA, Northern Region



## Presentation of trophy after Inter Cluster Games by the MCD of Yendi, Yendi MA, Northern Region



# VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITIES



## **EDITH OBENG**

Tokoroano, Oti Region

“I want to express our heartfelt appreciation for the construction of Tokoroano road, especially the culvert.

Before the work was done, this section of the road was almost impossible to use because the crossing had been badly washed out and became dangerous. Returning from the farm with loads was especially difficult.

Many times, we were forced to take a longer alternative route through the farmland. If we came by bicycle or motorbike, we often had to get down and struggle to cross.

Today, everything has changed. The road is now motorable and safe, and it has removed a major daily hardship for our community. Cars, bicycles, motorbikes and pedestrians can pass smoothly without stress. We no longer have to take the long route, and our journeys are faster and easier.

This improvement has brought back comfort and normal life. We can come here to wash and children also gather around to play.

We are truly grateful to SOCO for this timely intervention.”



## **JEREMIAH ATADINE**

(School Prefect) Atolisum Junior High School

“We used to study in an unfinished classroom that was full of dust. Our uniforms got dirty every day, so we had to wash them often after school. The chairs and desks were old and broken, and sometimes they tore our uniforms. We also did not have enough chairs and desks for everyone, so learning was not easy.

Now SOCO has built 3 unit classrooms for our school. The floor is cemented, so there is no dust and our uniforms stay cleaner. The classrooms have fans, so we do not sweat too much during lessons. We also have enough chairs and desks for every student.

We are happy because we can now sit well, learn well, and focus on our studies. Thank you SOCO for the new classrooms, furniture and the support. We are very grateful.”

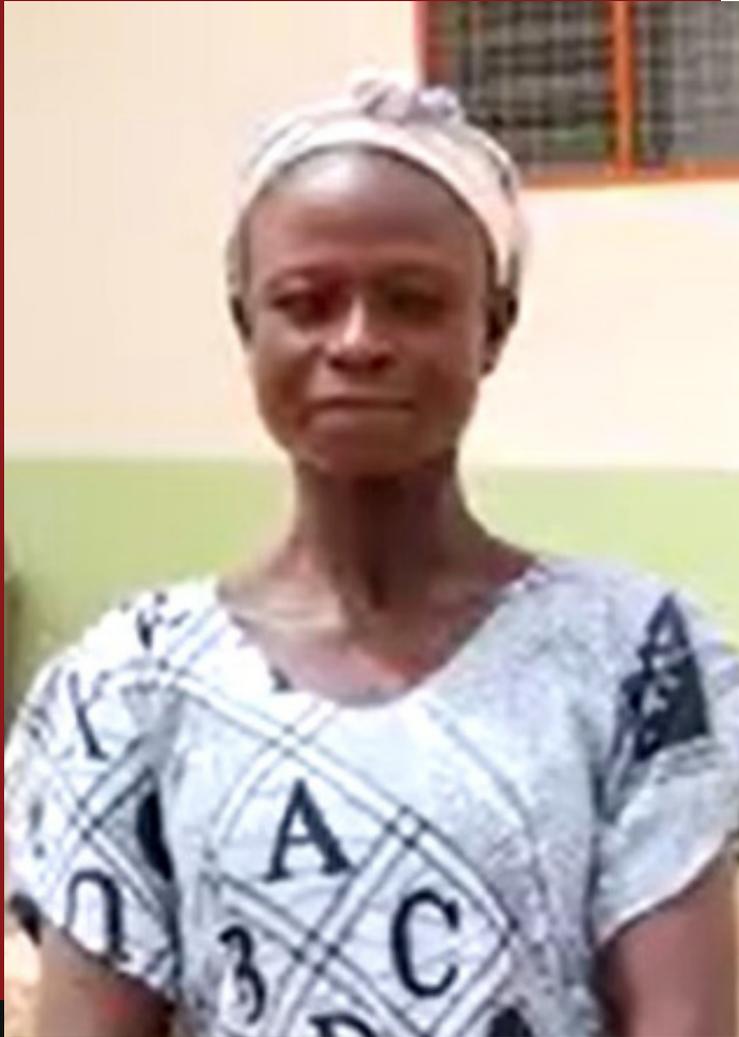


**DALABRA ABDUL FATAW**  
Gundogu Electoral Area, Yendi

“For some time, our community faced serious water challenges. It affected our daily life and made things difficult for families, especially women and children. In 2018, the SOCO team came to meet with us and listen to our concerns about the water situation. They engaged the community and worked with us to find a solution.

Today, we are happy because we now have water in this community. The situation has improved, and the tension that used to come from the water shortage has reduced. Women and even motor riders coming here to fetch water with ease. Life is calmer, and people are more comfortable.

On behalf of the people of Gundogu, I want to say thank you to SOCO for this support. We also appreciate the World Bank and the Yendi Municipal Assembly for their efforts. The community is truly excited about this project, and we are grateful.”



## **ADWOA NPORBI**

**Gbangbapong, Saboba District,  
Northern Region**

“I want to say a big thank you to SOCO and the District Assembly. They have supported our community by constructing the Gbangbapong CHPS compound and providing an office and accommodation for the nurses. Because the nurses now have a place to work and stay, the facility is active and we can get help when we need it.

In the past, getting medical care was difficult because we often had to travel all the way to Saboba, and that was not easy for many families. Now, we can come to the Gbangbapong CHPS compound for treatment. If the case is serious, the nurses will refer us to Saboba for further care.

This support has brought relief to our community, and we are very grateful. Thank you to SOCO and the District Assembly for caring about our health.”



## **ADOPOKA ADIGRE**

### **Yin Song Ya Soap Makers**

“As a person living with a disability, joining this group has given me a fresh start and real hope.

Before, I did not know anything about making soap. Today, I can confidently produce my own soap and I understand the steps and materials needed.

The income I earn is helping me take care of my medical needs and also provide better meals for my family. I feel more confident and independent, and I am proud that I now have a skill that supports my home.

Being with my group members also makes me happy. Each meeting teaches me something new, encourages me, and keeps me active during the day.”



## **KUNJI VIDA NAGANTA**

### **Dambai Vegetable Farmers Association**

“After I completed Junior High School, I wanted to continue my education, but I did not have anyone to support me.

Joining this farming group changed my story. With the encouragement and support of my group members, I was able to continue to Senior High School and keep my dream alive. This experience has given me hope and confidence that young people, especially girls and women, can achieve more when we are given the right opportunity.

I sincerely thank SOCO and the Government of Ghana for supporting our group. Please continue to support us, so we can keep moving forward and help more young people to do the same”.



## **KASHIFATU MOARI ABUBAKARI**

### **West Mamprusi Youth Parliament**

“I have seen how the SOCO Project is bringing young people together, no matter where we come from. Through cultural events, we share our stories and traditions and we learn to respect our differences. The sports activities and community social centres have also taught us teamwork, discipline, and fair play.

Most importantly, SOCO has given us a real sense of belonging. We are no longer divided. We are learning, growing, and moving forward together. SOCO is truly a life changer. Long live SOCO, and long live Ghana”.

## Contact us on:

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The SOCO project continues to support stronger, safer and more resilient communities across the Northern Regions of Ghana. The work reflects the commitment of the ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, District Assemblies and Community Members who share vision of peaceful and inclusive development.

*'Think Regionally, Act Locally'- The SOCO Project is regionally coordinated solution that effectively responds to the local needs.*

