



# **Youth Economic Inclusion through the Next Generation Local Economic Development (NGLED)**

## **MMDCEs BREAKFAST MEETING**

### **REPORT**

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## Contents

|                                                                           |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Acronyms .....                                                            | 2  |
| Executive Summary .....                                                   | 3  |
| 1.0 Opening Sessions .....                                                | 3  |
| 1.1 Welcome Address by Director of ILGS .....                             | 5  |
| 2.0 Affirming Districts Uptake of the NGLED project .....                 | 6  |
| 2.1 KEEA Project – Fishhaven Farm .....                                   | 6  |
| 2.2 STMA Project – Ecohoof Ranch.....                                     | 7  |
| 2.3 NAMA Project – Big Mind Catfish Farm.....                             | 8  |
| 2.4 ASEMA Project – Aquayouth Harvesters.....                             | 9  |
| 2.5 AEDA Project – Atiwa Youth Poultry.....                               | 9  |
| 3.0 Insights & Emerging Issues .....                                      | 10 |
| 3.1 Group Size and Management .....                                       | 10 |
| 3.2 Operational and Infrastructure Needs for Project Sustainability ..... | 10 |
| 3.3 Financial Management and Budgeting for Youth Projects.....            | 11 |
| 3.4 Project Supervision and Focal Persons: Critical for Success .....     | 11 |
| 3.5 Youth Engagement & Mindset .....                                      | 11 |
| 3.6 Market Access and Branding.....                                       | 11 |
| 3.7 Community Involvement.....                                            | 12 |
| 3.8 Scaling and Expansion Challenges .....                                | 12 |
| 3.9 Wrapping up the Project .....                                         | 12 |
| 4.0 Conclusions .....                                                     | 14 |

## Acronyms

|        |                                                                 |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| AEDA   | Atiwa East District Assembly                                    |
| ASEMA  | Awutu Senya East Municipal Assembly                             |
| DACF   | District Assembly Common Funds                                  |
| LED    | Local Economic Development                                      |
| IGF    | Internally Generated Funds                                      |
| ILGS   | Institute of Local Government Studies                           |
| KEEA   | Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem                                      |
| MMDCEs | Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives           |
| MLGCRA | Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs |
| MMDA   | Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly                   |
| NAMA   | Nsawam Adoagyiri Municipal Assembly                             |
| NGLED  | Next Generation Local Economic Development                      |
| STMA   | Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly                          |

## Executive Summary

The Next Generation Local Economic Development (NGLED) project is an action research initiative managed by the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS). It tests whether local governments can create jobs for young people and promote their economic inclusion through local enterprise. Successive Ghanaian governments have made youth employment a priority, but their policies have often lost momentum once implementation began. NGLED was designed to produce evidence on what local assemblies can achieve in this area and to inform national Local Economic Development (LED) policy. The project started in 2023 and remains closely aligned with the current government's flagship programmes, including "Adwumawura" and "Nkoko Nketenkete".

The MMDCEs Breakfast Meeting brought together the five beneficiary assemblies: KEEA, STMA, NAMA, ASEMA and AEDA. Each assembly reviewed its pilot in aquaculture, goat rearing or poultry farming and set out how it would replicate and sustain the project once ILGS support ends. The pilots had faced real setbacks. These included high youth turnover, fish poisoning and theft, livestock deaths caused by poor breed selection, and long production cycles that left the youth without income. Even so, every assembly committed to continuing its project and forming a second youth group.

### Programme Uptake and Sustainability

At KEEA, the Fishhaven Farm will be rebuilt around better security and a new cohort of committed youth, whom the current group will mentor. The Assembly will renovate the second pond and fence the site by December 2026 at an estimated cost of GHC20,000. It will also restock the pond without delay, using the GHC19,000 worth of feed held at R&B Farms. To finance expansion, it will ask the Sector Ministry for approval to use about GHC100,000 of its District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) for the agribusinesses. Over the longer term, the Assembly plans to develop the Egyeikrom land into an agro-business enclave for fish, poultry and vegetable farming. It will also work with chiefs and the community to protect the project. The Assembly will also assist the ILGS document the success stories from the *nkoko nketenkete* business as a model for future poultry projects.

STMA will replicate the Ecohoof Ranch by splitting its existing herd of 16 goats. The two committed youths will move eight goats to a new peri-urban site at Ketan Junction. The remaining eight will stay at the current site as seed stock for the second group. The Assembly will add to the roughly GHC4,000 remaining with ILGS so that it can buy hardier breeds such as the Savannah. It already pays the youth a stipend from its Internally Generated Fund (IGF) and has hired two security men. It also intends to buy a tricycle for transporting feed and to introduce poultry farming. Before the next review meeting, its focal person will submit a proposal showing what the Assembly will contribute and what support it expects from ILGS.

NAMA will move from catfish to poultry farming because of weak local demand for catfish. Its second group will be made up of three young people who performed well under the Assembly's "Nkoko Nketenkete" pilot. A poultry house similar to the one at Atiwa will be built before December 2026. The cost will be shared equally: ILGS will raise the remaining project funds of about GHC13,200 to GHC15,000, and the Assembly will provide a matching GHC15,000. Birds will then be bought with IGF and DACF resources. Construction will begin

once a chieftaincy dispute over the land is resolved, for which the Assembly requested a two-week extension. The new beneficiaries will be told from the outset that the Assembly's support is time-bound and that they are expected to graduate into independent businesses.

ASEMA has the strongest commercial record of the five. Its first harvest brought in GHC18,850, and it has since stocked a further 2,100 fish. The MCE has committed to fencing the site. The Assembly will select its second group from the 34 young people who have expressed interest in the government's fisheries programme, with the current lead beneficiary helping to identify those who are committed. Future harvests will be staggered to ease pressure on preservation and marketing.

AEDA's Atiwa Youth Poultry has saved over GHC12,000 (to be verified) and will double its capacity from 500 to 1,000 birds. It will move to layers so that daily egg sales give the youth a steady income. Two new recruits are already training under the technical focal person and will form the next cohort. The Assembly is also looking at ways to provide stipends during the start-up period.

To formalise these commitments, every assembly is required to submit a proposal for its second group before the national forum. The proposal must cover group formation, fencing and infrastructure, the use of remaining project funds and a budget showing the assembly's own financial contribution.

### **Key Lessons and Next Steps**

Several lessons emerged from the pilot. Groups of two have proved more stable than larger cooperatives. Projects have tended to succeed where the MMDCE showed political will, a dedicated technical focal person was in place, the community felt ownership of the project, the site was secure and the youth had reliable access to markets.

The project now enters its final phase, which runs from September to December 2026. The remaining work includes financial closeout, finalising the assembly proposals, producing documentaries of success stories and engaging the Sector Ministry. Together, these steps will ensure that the lessons from the pilot inform national youth employment policy.

## **1.0 Opening Sessions**

The programme began at 9.10 a.m. at the ILGS Conference (Syndicate) Room with a prayer by a participant. Afterwards, the MMDCEs or their representatives were made to introduce themselves. All the five beneficiary assemblies were represented.

### **1.1 Welcome Address by Director of ILGS**

Prof Nicholas Awortwi, the Director of ILGS formally welcomed all the participants to the meeting. He indicated that Governments of Ghana have always been quick to develop policies targeted at reducing youth unemployment through job creation. However, the implementation phases of these policies lack the enthusiasm used in developing them. He cited the recently launched Local Economic Development (LED) policy by the then Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD) as a case in point. Additionally, Prof Awortwi explained that unlike in developed countries where government played key roles in job creation, in Ghana successive governments rather hold the position of creating enabling environments for businesses to thrive.

He reiterated that the action research was being piloted to test the enabling environment, and also with the belief that LED could be improved through job creation. The study has therefore sought to test if local governments could contribute to job creation and to provide empirical evidence that would inform the formulation of LED policies. Prof Awortwi revealed that although the project started in 2023 when the former government was in power, it still aligns with the five (5) flagship programmes of the current government e.g. “Adwumawura” initiative, “Nkoko nketenkete”, among others.

In his concluding statement, Prof. Nicholas Awortwi attested that the project has provided insights into the strengths and weaknesses of programmes that target job creation for the youth. He also remarked that the action research, though encountered several challenges such as youth turnover, mortality, also yielded some insights e.g., young graduates’ preference to work in smaller groups of two (2) and their desire to earn some monthly stipends in the period preceding the sale of their products. He explained that these challenges and insights were what had necessitated the breakfast meeting as a platform for discussion aimed at ensuring that LED through job creation thrives in their respective MMDAs and contributes meaningfully to the formulation of national policies.

## **2.0 Affirming Districts Uptake of the NGLED project**

Participants made presentations on the current status of their project and their plans to upscale the projects e.g. setting up new youth groups, exploring funding sources, timelines and measure to ensure that their upscaling conforms to the local needs.

### **2.1 KEEA Project – Fishhaven Farm**

The MCE for KEEA, Hon Ismail Zagoon-Saeed made a presentation on the youth business group. He indicated that the group engaged in aquaculture with various support from the assembly e.g. offer of land at Egyekrom, organisation of team meetings, facilitation of opening a bank account at GCB, technical backstopping, handing over of a partially working borehole, and financial support to fix defective pond. He also recounted the painful experience of the youth group when they had their fishes poisoned at the time they had fully matured for sale.

Mr Zagoon-Saeed expressed the assembly's commitment to support the project by renovating the second pond, fencing the project site to prevent unauthorised access, as well as retooling the youth group to bounce back into business. The fencing could cost around GHC20,0000 and should be completed by December 2026. The security issue highlighted community engagement gaps. Therefore, the Chiefs and the community would have to be engaged to keep an eye on the project. Community involvement was proposed to build ownership and protect assets and improve project resilience.

Assurance was given that despite KEEA's closeness to the coast there is still a demand for freshwater fish such as the catfish. However, markets have to be explored. Importance of product demand and market for aquaculture was stressed with confirmation of growing local demand for catfish and other fish varieties. Despite past skepticism about fish farming viability, evidence shows individuals successfully running fish farms. The municipality expressed its commitment to aquaculture as a key youth employment sector

The Assembly was advised to explore greenhouse vegetable projects alongside aquaculture. The greenhouse facilities at Egyekrom are underutilized and could support organic vegetable production to complement aquaculture. The MCE revealed the assembly's plans to designate the piece of land at Egyekrom into an agro-business enclave for three (3) agricultural projects – vegetable farming, poultry farming and the fish farming project. Egyekrom area is said to be suitable for as a business hub and once set up, it would be very easy to poach investors. There is also a plan to develop an area in Mempeasem around the axle loading station for onion cultivation. Thus, an incubator-like environment for skill development and business growth would have to be created.

The Assembly was tasked to recruit passionate youth to revive the business. The current youth group would have to be engaged to guide the in-coming cohort with their experience. The need for stipends or incentives was highlighted to maintain youth interest during long production cycles

Prof. Awortwi hinted that, feed worth GHC19000 was available at the R&B Farms. Because the necessary pond renovations have already been completed, the most pressing directive is to stock the pond as quickly as possible. This immediate restocking is critical to ensure that the GHC 19,000 worth of feed currently at R&B is utilized before it goes to waste. The assembly

was asked to go for them immediately for storage because the R&F Farms wanted to do away with outstanding stock in their records.

He also revealed that the Sector Ministry allows DAs to vary the use of their Common Funds, and so KEEA should seek permission to use some of the funds to cater for the agribusinesses. The assembly could ask for about a hundred thousand cedis (GHC100,000) and would need to attach budget, concept notes and pictures of the project.

The Assembly was also tasked to assist the ILGS to document the success stories from the *nkoko nketenket* poultry programme to serve as a model for future cohorts interested in poultry business.

## **2.2 STMA Project – Ecohoof Ranch**

The Mayor of the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA), Hon Lawyer Faidoo, on his part indicated that the youth group engaged in goat rearing. He explained that the project initially started with four graduates but only two had been active and demonstrated commitment since he assumed office. He emphasized that partnerships exceeding two people often become problematic, and that most youths are not interested in cooperative models.

According to him, the assembly had supported the group by securing them a temporary site, engaged two security men to resolve the security challenges, as well as paying allowances to the two active and committed members from their Internally Generated Fund (IGF). This was to help sustain their interest during the long turnaround time required for the goats to mature.

He recounted that the group faced several setbacks: lack of due diligence in selecting the starting breed which led to high mortality (reducing the herd from 35 down to 16 goats) because of lack of professional guidance. Also, the farm's urban setting made feed availability highly challenging, as free-range grazing was unsafe and the university graduates feel uncomfortable being seen cutting grass or grazing.

The Mayor mentioned that the remaining stock of goats was very healthy and doing well, and the youth had decided to take half (8) of the goats to start a new business at Ketan Junction and leave the rest at the current site for the next cohort. *There are plans to relocate part of the business away from its present location to a peri-urban setting with eight (8) of the goats. The remaining goats will still be at the current location as seed capital for the would-be new business group to start with. The ILGS hinted that, there is a remaining budget of about GHC4,000 to support the new groups.*

He gave assurance of the assembly's commitment to expand the project to help more young individuals in the metropolis. This would include seeking funds to purchase a tricycle "aboboyaa" to ease the transportation of feed, as well as plans to relocate and expand the setup at rural areas where feed is readily available. He also intended introducing poultry farming to run alongside the goat rearing projects.

For the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA), the way forward centres on restructuring the goat rearing initiative into a more sustainable and geographically diversified model. The Mayor is expected to submit proposal detailing formation of the new group, budgeting for required investment, and plan for splitting existing goat stock, including the

Assembly's contributions and external funding sources. In addition, the assembly should evaluate allocating funds to augment the remaining money they have with ILGS to procure more resilient breeds such as the Savannah to ensure the new group to minimize mortality risks, while exploring complementary investment avenues that STMA can support.

To formalize these next steps, the assembly's focal person is required to develop and submit a comprehensive proposal detailing the operational strategy for managing the new cohorts. This proposal must include a detailed budget clearly delineating the resources the assembly will provide versus the support required from the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS). Submitting this proposal in a timely manner prior to the next review meeting would ensure that definitive conclusions and resource allocations could be made.

### **2.3 NAMA Project – Big Mind Catfish Farm**

The MCE from Nsawam Adoagyiri Municipal Assembly (NAMA), Hon Philbert Amenorper Fummey, spoke on his youth group and indicated that the early phase of the youth's aquaculture pilot project had some challenges due to lack of political will on the part of the former Municipal Chief Executive (MCE). He raised a concern which was clarified that the youth group selected the product themselves in the proposal they submitted. The MCE explained that the youth were not natives of the community and therefore lacked knowledge of the local context; they did not know that rearing catfish in Nsawam was a more or less a taboo. Hence, the seeming lack of interest of the local people in the product. He pointed out that the focal person and the coordinating director took the project upon themselves to ensure its success. Also, the skills and resilience of the youth group have ensured the continuous existence of the project till today.

Regarding the setting up of the new group, the MCE revealed the Assembly's interest in poultry farming, which has also been the interest of the in-coming youth group. He explained that the assembly had earlier piloted the 'nkoko nketenkete' project with three strategically selected individuals who performed exceptionally well, and successfully transitioned from rearing broilers to layers. Accordingly, the assembly was now planning to migrate these individuals into the NGLED project. On timelines, the MCE pleaded for a two-week extension due to ongoing chieftaincy issue on the land that has been earmarked for the project. Once resolved, the necessary physical structures would be built and procure day-old chicks for the youths to start their business. Thus, since the goal is now to pivot towards poultry farming, the way forward involves focusing on the construction of a large-scale facility similar to that of the Atiwa Youth Poultry before December 2026.

To finance the structure, the ongoing project's funds of approximately GHC13,200 would be augmented by ILGS to GHC 15,000, with the expectation that the assembly would provide an additional matching amount of GHC 15,000 to cover the total building costs. Once the coop is completed, the assembly would have to explore various funding sources such as Internally Generated Fund (IGF) and DACF to procure and stock the birds.

A critical directive moving forward is to establish clear terms with these beneficiaries right from the start. They must be made to understand that the initiative is a formal partnership with

the District Assembly, which retains some decision-making authority. Furthermore, they need to be aware that the assembly's support is time-bound, with the ultimate objective of transitioning them to run their own independent enterprises.

1. To develop proposal for transitioning from catfish farming to poultry farming at Nsawam, including facility construction and youth engagement plans, and justify change in product based on market analysis.
2. To transfer unused fish feed stocks and the two tarpaulins to KEEA to optimize resource use and prevent spoilage. Also, contact the R & B Farms for their remaining feed for both KEEA and ASEMA.

## **2.4 ASEMA Project – Aquayouth Harvesters**

The Municipal Planning Officer for ASEMA, Mr. Abdel-Hafez Bagrey Abdulai, represented the MCE who had to attend another pressing engagement at the instance of the Central Region Regional Minister. Mr. Abdulai reported that their local fishery project had been highly successful, having generated an amount of GHC 18,850 during the maiden sale. He expressed the Assembly's gratitude to Prof. Nicholas Awortwi and Dr. Jerome R. Awortwe-Abban for keeping the project running. He explained that the project's success was largely due to the dedication of Justice Aikins, the youth who has been managing the project single-handedly the whole of this year. Mr. Abdulai also mentioned that the Assembly did not have an issue with finding a market for the produce. However, their main challenge had to do with post-harvest preservation and marketing. As a way out, he said the fishes would be harvested in batches in subsequent cycles. He recounted that the project faced significant security challenges, which ultimately forced the young man to sell the fish immediately they matured.

He further talked about the MCE's commitment to addressing the security issues by fencing the project site, and reiterated that resolving the security issues and finding dedicated youth remain the key priorities for the project's continuous growth. He explained that measures were being initiated to expand the programme. According to him, 34 youths had already shown interest in the Government's broader fisheries project. To ensure the success of the expansion, the assembly had planned to engage Justice Aikins to help identify other committed individuals to join the initiative. He concluded by noting that the project had stocked 2,100 new fish that were in their second month.

## **2.5 AEDA Project – Atiwa Youth Poultry**

A representative of the DCE, Mr. Benjamin Nkansah Wallis, an Assistant Director at the Atiwa East District Assembly informed participants that the Atiwa Youth Poultry enterprise was sited away from the town centre and that posed a challenge to the youth in terms of cost of commuting. Also, the remote location posed some security concerns, although local residents selling goods around the toll booth area somehow alleviates the situation. He noted that a significant advantage for the project's survival had been the focal person, a technical expert who had consistently supported and worked hand in hand with youth.

Mr. Wallis revealed that, the project had yielded positive financial results and had so far accumulated savings of over GHC12,000 (to be verified from the pay-in slips for each sale).

He explained that the promising returns from the initial 500 birds had driven a push to expand the capacity to 1,000 birds. This is because layers offer faster returns, making them more attractive to the youth.

The new strategy would involve stocking layers to leverage the daily sale of eggs to raise interim income before eventually selling the birds when they fully mature. To ensure the project's continuous success, he mentioned that two new individuals had been recruited and were currently understudying the technical focal person to develop their capability. He concluded that he was also exploring some options to support the youth with stipends to sustain their interest in the project.

The Assembly was tasked to prepare project update and plans for scaling up poultry production, including orders for 1000 birds and stipend arrangement for the youth.

## **3.0 Insights & Emerging Issues**

### **3.1 Group Size and Management**

From the multiple projects, it was found that youth partnerships of more than two members tend to create conflicts. Smaller group of two individuals is preferred for better cooperation and management, and so future youth enterprises should consider optimal group sizes to enhance commitment and reduce friction. However, cooperative formation among university graduates faces cultural resistance due to reluctance to work in large groups

### **3.2 Operational and Infrastructure Needs for Project Sustainability**

The meeting identified critical infrastructure, security, and financial management improvements as key enablers for project success. Security and fencing are vital for aquaculture and livestock assets protection to prevent sabotage and theft. The lack of fencing previously contributed to poisoning incidents and asset loss. Assemblies are urged to prioritize fencing as

the first step in project revitalization. Fencing cost is estimated around 20,000–30,000 Ghana cedis, with urgency to complete before restocking fish, especially for the Fishhaven Farm.

### **3.3 Financial Management and Budgeting for Youth Projects**

Funds must be properly managed and therefore poor investment choices should be avoided. For example, the youth in goat rearing project bought unhealthy stock due to lack of understanding that this was their own business investment. Assemblies are to provide clearer guidance on loan terms and risk management to youth groups. Proposals are requested from assemblies for their second groups. These should include budgets and use of remaining funds.

### **3.4 Project Supervision and Focal Persons: Critical for Success**

There are advantages inherent in having dedicated technical staff who provide support to youth groups.

- District-level focal persons embedded in assemblies improve project oversight and youth engagement.
- Coordination between planning, finance, and agriculture officers is necessary to push local economy projects.
- Lack of a dedicated local economy department in assemblies complicates ownership and accountability.

### **3.5 Youth Engagement & Mindset**

Sustaining youth involvement requires addressing mindset and incentives. Youth mindset and financial incentives affect participation and retention as young people seek quick returns and regular incomes.

- The need for **stipends or income** during long production cycles was emphasized to maintain motivation.
- Awareness campaigns are required to change youth perceptions and encourage commitment to agriculture and aquaculture.
- Mindset shift should highlight the importance of productive youth engagement.

### **3.6 Market Access and Branding**

They are key drivers for youth business success, and should focus on value chains and creating buyer-seller linkages.

- Assemblies are encouraged to participate actively in marketing and branding local products to boost sales e.g. branded fish with assembly seals to assure quality.
- Youth enterprises need integration with buyers to ensure demand and cash flow.
- Value chain thinking is essential for sustainable local economic development and youth enterprise growth

### **3.7 Community Involvement**

Involving the community will serve as protective and motivational Factor. This is intended to increase project ownership and reduce sabotage.

- Engaging local chiefs and community members to view projects as communal assets.
- Community support can deter vandalism and sabotage, as seen in the poisoning incident.
- Projects though was originally designed as private sector but evolving towards community-based models
- Community buy-in is critical for long-term sustainability and local pride.

### **3.8 Scaling and Expansion Challenges**

Scaling up and expanding the project required committed youth and political will on the part of MMDCEs.

- Some pilot projects failed due to lack of political support and poor initial selection of beneficiaries.
- Successful groups often operated with strong commitment from coordinating directors and focal persons
- Expansion requires identifying committed youth and securing political and institutional backing
- Assemblies should plan to start new groups and scale successful models with lessons learned from pilot failures.

### **3.9 Wrapping up the Project**

#### ***a) Upcoming Timelines and Reporting for National Integration***

The project is moving toward final reporting and will involve national forum discussions to influence government programs. Emphasis will be on integrating pilot lessons into government flagship programs at the upcoming National Economic Development Forum. The final reporting and proposal submission is set for September to December 2026 to align with government policy cycles. Assemblies are, therefore, required to:

- Complete current status reports, scaling plans, and budget proposals before the breakfast meeting and national forum.
- Proposals should cover fencing, infrastructure, youth group formation, and project budgets for new phases.
- Prioritize activities and identify immediate steps with clear timelines.

#### ***b) Preparations for National Forum and Government Engagement***

This will involve video documentary production and consolidated presentations. Specifically,

- Positive success stories will be showcased to support local economy advocacy.
- Videos planned will demonstrate pilot impact and youth enterprise testimonials.
- There will be coordination among assemblies to present unified proposals and challenges to government.

Prior to that, there will be engagement with the incoming sector minister that is scheduled for early September to discuss policy integration.

### ***c) Financial Closeout and Audit Compliance***

As the project gradually comes to an end, outstanding activities should be carried out to avoid returning unused funds to donors. Thus,

- Assemblies must spend remaining funds or return them by project end in September.
- Proposals should justify fund reallocation and new investments to maximize impact before closure.
- There will be coordination between assemblies and donors to ensure smooth financial closure while supporting ongoing activities.
- There will be focus on using all available resources effectively for project sustainability and government adoption.

## 4.0 Conclusions

The NGLED breakfast meeting successfully demonstrated that local governments can actively stimulate youth employment and foster economic development through targeted agribusiness initiatives, provided that foundational support systems are in place. Although the pilot phase faced notable operational, security, and behavioural challenges, from asset sabotage and livestock mortality to the need for regular income streams, it provided invaluable empirical insights.

Ultimately, sustaining local economic development requires a deliberate shift toward smaller, highly committed youth groups, robust community involvement, strong institutional and political backing, and strategic infrastructure investments like secure fencing. As the project concludes its pilot cycle, the MMDAs' commitment to scale up these initiatives through structured proposals, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and integration into national policy frameworks ensures that lessons learned will meaningfully inform future youth employment strategies across Ghana.