

OUR STORIES

'I AM AWARE' promotes accountability in service delivery in 3 Districts

By: Gildfred Boateng Asiamah

As part of our citizen-duty bearer empowerment advocacy campaign, we organized a series of engagements in three districts – Kwaebibirem and Birim North Districts in the Eastern Region, and Shama District in the Western Region – from October 2017 to November 2017.



Gildfred Boateng Asiamah [IAA Team Member] addressing stakeholders in the Shama District

The purpose of these engagements was to brief district-level bureaucrats, assembly members and representatives of civic groups and community-based organizations about the state of public service delivery in their district. It was also aimed at discussing how data can help improve evidence-informed advocacy and policy planning towards improved service delivery. Our visit also sought to identify some local partners to build their capacity in service delivery monitoring and advocacy under the 'I Am Aware' volunteers program.

Upon arrival, we had a closed session interaction with the District Chief Executives (DCEs) in all the three districts and members of the District Coordinating and Planning Unit (DCPU) which is made up of District Coordinating Director, Heads of Departments of the District Assembly and, occasionally, heads of other sectors who attend and participate in the meetings of the DCPU. The presiding members of the three local assemblies also participated in this closed session interactions.



Awal Mohammed [IAA Team Lead] addressing civic groups in

We explained to them how 'I Am Aware' data on service delivery provides evidence that can inform policy discussions on service delivery, planning and/or the preparation of development plans and annual action plans of the district. Accordingly, we shared with the

participants the improvements and the gaps in the delivery of social services such as education, health, security and rural water in their districts. We advised the various DCPUs to take advantage of the available empirical data on service delivery provided by IAA to inform policy making and development plans of their districts. The euphoria and appreciation expressed by the participants was no less an indication that their capacity to use available empirical data on service delivery to draw future development plans had been improved.

As part of our mandate to strengthen the existing accountability structures within the districts we visited, we also met with Assembly Members, Unit Committees members and some Chiefs. We exposed to the 'I Am Aware' database and how to access and use the data to identify gaps in service delivery and make informed decisions. We also took them through the governance and accountability structures within the Assembly, especially, the existence of Public Relations and Complaints Committee and the right of stakeholders to petition, and other mechanisms through which they can demand accountability and responsiveness from service providers within their districts. Participants were surprised to learn about these existing opportunities they could take advantage of to demand accountability from duty bearers.

We held another meeting with representatives of citizens and civic groups, including, Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs), school management committees, farmer-based organisations, pressure groups, PWDs, market women, traders, and public servants in the district. The engagement with these groups proved very useful because we had the opportunity to introduce them to the state of service delivery in their districts using the 'I Am Aware' data, and the avenues to demand accountability from decision makers and service providers.



A cross-section of DCPU members in Birim North

During the interactions with the various groups in all three districts, we took cognizance of the frustration expressed by some individuals in their attempt to demand improved service delivery in the district. As a result, we have resolved to mobilize groups of like-minded citizens and build their capacity to make them more effective in demanding accountability in service delivery. This includes the setting

up of a social action group that will help drive citizens/community demand for service delivery accountability and organizing zonal meetings to mobilize citizens around key service delivery challenges facing their communities. Again, we hope to organize an interface meeting with key district level bureaucrats to discuss the service delivery concerns and how the Assembly can respond to the demands from citizens, with the expectation that citizens' demands will not be met with antagonism by the bureaucrats and local politicians.

Our Stories – October to December 2017

