VITAL SIGNS

Vital Signs Ghana Stakeholders Workshop

Erata Hotel, Accra

17 December 2012, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Draft Report

The Vital Signs monitoring system was launched in 2012 with a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Vital Signs provides decision-makers with integrated information on agriculture, ecosystem services and human well-being, and monitors changes in vital ecosystem services upon which agricultural production and farmers' livelihoods depend.

The monitoring system is initially launching in Tanzania, Ethiopia and Ghana. In Accra on December 17th, 2012, Vital Signs held a stakeholders workshop for Ghana.

Workshop objectives:

- Present the goals and design of the monitoring system and engage with Ghana stakeholders, beneficiaries and potential Vital Signs partners;
- Receive stakeholders' input on data and decision support needs;
- Learn about existing data collection and monitoring efforts in Ghana; and
- Gather information on potential geographies for monitoring efforts.

Participants:

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Dr. Sandy Andelman, Executive Director, Vital Signs (Conservation International). **Dr. Bob Scholes**, Deputy Director, Vital Signs (CSIR), and **Dr. Alex Awiti,** Aga Khan University, developer of the Vital Signs Regional Profile Reports, led the workshop.

Dr. Sandy Andelman, Executive Director of Vital Signs gave an introductory presentation ton Vital Signs., following which the workshop participants raised the following questions:

- What information will Vital Signs collect, and how will it be gathered?
- Who determines the indicators, and how will they satisfy local needs?
- Who are the stakeholders involved in the data collection, and how will we balance information needs from different stakeholders? Will the system be locally owned and operated?
- How is Vital Signs different from other systems, like the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment?

Key issues brought up by participants in the course of the discussion confirmed that:

- It is important to determine what Vital Signs metrics and indicators fit into the national policy framework.
- Need to involve the district assemblies.
- The Government's interests can be short-term, and there is a need for story-telling and suggestions that address immediate goals while dissuading policy-makers from making bad long-term decisions.
- Government indicators are based on what they think is feasible, not necessarily what stakeholders want to know. There is a need to look closely at the indicators outlined in the development plan and assess whether they are relevant to where the country wants to go.

- Unregulated and illegal mining is a big concern: mining has been allowed in the reserves, and surface mining pollutes water sources and degrades the land. Mining activities have been concentrated in the Sudan savanna and Southern forest.
- There has been pollution and a dwindling of resources as a result of reduction in run-off and catchment degradation. Another large water security problem is the disappearance of storage capacity due to massive siltation of the river basin.
- Vital Signs should be consistent with what the Government has committed to, but should not limit itself to the way the government is collecting data.

Major areas of consensus:

Information gaps:

- Obtaining data requires going to individual institutes, often at a fee.
- Developing capacity is a big concern, and it will be important to have people who can do the monitoring and tell the story of how the things that are changing (say, loss of shellfish) are connected to the loss of ecosystems.
- Ghana would like to have a system that can project potential scenarios in 50 years: for example, what the landscape situation will be in the future, and whether the land converted to produce food will be at the expense of forests and nature.
- There is a need for data on desertification, and assessments in terms of wood lots in desert-prone areas using satellite data to assess coverage of woodlots in northern savanna.
- It will be critical to examine the broad scope of the extractive industry, particularly how it impacts crop productivity and water resources.

Geographies:

- The Government is focused on the Northern Savanna area, a region prone to bush fires and subject to water degradation and reduction of water availability from catchment degradation. Virtually all of the problems discussed occur in this area.
- The problems of the South (the coast and the transitional zone) have not received the same attention as the problems of the North – could this be a justification to begin collecting data there?
- It was agreed that Vital Signs will sample along a North-South orientation. This would cover 80% of Ghanaian agro-ecological zones and cut through 50 district assemblies. It would include Sudan savanna, Guinea savanna, the transitional zone, moist and dry forest, coastal savanna with mangrove swamps, and strand vegetation. This would provide a basis for every part of the country to be represented.

Stakeholders:

- Key Vital Signs policy-makers and stakeholders in Ghana will be the relevant ministries (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, and Ministry of Energy), the agencies of the ministries, the EPA, the universities, and other non-government players.

Data Sources:

- AfSIS
- AGRA
- CSIR (has 13 institutes in Ghana, 8 of which are involved in agricultural resource activities)
    - Animal Research Institute (ARI)
    - Crops Research Institute (CRI)
    - Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG)
    - Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute (PGRRI)
    - Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)
    - Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (STEPRI)
    - Soil Research Institute (SRI)
    - Water Research Institute (WRI)
- Global Yield Gap Atlas (GYGA)
- GLOWA Volta Project (GVP)
- N2Africa
- Ministry of Food and Agriculture research extension committees
- University of Ghana and other universities
- WASCAL (West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use)

Expressions of support:

The participants were unanimous that this initiative presents an unprecedented opportunity for consultation and information sharing, and for developing increased capacity for monitoring and influencing policy in Ghana.