**Project Title:** EcoGhardens: Growing Food for Economic Sustainability  
**Proposed Start Date:** May 2023  
**Proposed End Date:** August 2023  
**Student Project Leader:** Priscilla Kayku  
**Country of Origin:** Ghana  
**School:** Skidmore College  
**Participating Partners:**  
- **Agricultural Engineer:** Philip Selorm Kayku  
- **Landowner:** John Ahiadome on behalf of the Ababio Family  
**Country of Implementation:** Ghana

**BACKGROUND**

The onslaught of the pandemic exposed the grim reality of Ghana’s agricultural industry. As international borders closed, local markets saw a scarcity, and consequently, a hike in food produce prices. Tomatoes from Burkina Faso, onions from South Africa and Nigeria, okro from India, peppers from Vietnam, corn from South Africa and the United States of America – some of the most frequently eaten food crops in Ghana – suddenly became scarce and expensive. It was baffling how Ghana, a country with a climate suitable for growing all these food crops we tremendously imported, could not supply its own. I grew up in Accra, in the community of East Adenta. There are two major farmer’s markets which can be accessed from my community by car or by walking: the Madina market and the Adenta market. I conducted a series of short interviews over the summer of 2022 at the Adenta and Madina markets and discovered two things: 1. that the Adenta market traders mostly obtain their goods and produce from the Madina market, and 2. most people – just like my family – prefer to go to Madina to buy foodstuff as it has more variety. The Madina market, a large open-air market which spans several blocks and spreads across several main roads and the N1 highway, essentially feeds northern Accra. Farmers all over Ghana bring their produce to be sold at the Madina market, restaurants and schools with feeding programs source their produce from the Madina market, and many families in surrounding communities – just like mine – visit the market every Saturday to buy foodstuff for the week. In 2019, before the covid-19 pandemic struck, 20 GHS could get you an olonka (a circular tin container traders use to measure quantities) of fresh, ripe tomatoes in the market. Now, from personal experience, you would be hard pressed to get half an olonka of tomatoes at that price in Madina. The cost of food in Ghana has seen the highest rate of inflation, hitting a staggering 55.3% in November 2022. A scarcity or price hike at the Madina market affects everybody.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

A workable solution to this is introducing and encouraging backyard gardening and small-scale farming. The project, EcoGhardens, is an initiative which is designed with food gardens and community involvement at the forefront. EcoGhardens will be carried out in two parts:

1. A 1000 square meter farm in East Adenta which will provide 10 individuals from the East Adenta community hands-on experience and technical knowledge on how to start, grow and manage a farm, with the aim of transferring employable and entrepreneurial skills.
2. An outreach program which encourages community members to grow their own backyard food gardens.

Crops to be planted are Gamhar tomato, Cherry tomato, Loleza habanero, Mawenzi habanero, Midas cucumber, Okro, African Eggplant, Capsicum Bell Pepper and Green Leaf Lettuce.

**PROJECT DETAILS**

EcoGhardens represents the combination of science, modern inputs and our Ghanaian agricultural heritage geared towards a better standard of living. Through the adoption of agroecological principles, it will ensure economic adaptability and foster food diversity while conserving the natural environment. The project seeks to equip the community with modern agronomic skills that inculcates the principles of soil health, water conservation, food waste management, and food crop quality to actively boost local production of staple vegetables that are imported at high costs. An agricultural engineer and an agronomist will prepare presentations and talks to sensitize community members for the toils and harvests of farming. As an incentive, farm inputs such as fertilizer, seeds, and soil will be made available to all interested individuals in the community. The participating homeowners will be led through series of workshops and presentations – conducted under tents on the section of the land not farmed – on how to grow their own gardens in...
EXEMPLARY OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Our objective is to provide 10 individuals with hands-on training and experience with the aim of transferring employable and entrepreneurial skills, as they are guided through each stage of farming, from land preparation to harvesting. Additionally, we aim to help at least 15 different households start their own backyard food garden entirely for their personal consumption. As part of their training, the 10 individuals working on the farm will conduct routine checks on community members’ backyard gardens to check for neglect, and offer assistance when needed as backyard farming on any scale can be intimidating. The farm and backyard gardens will adopt the use of prepared soils, raised beds, plastic mulch and/or plant pots to prevent leaching excess rainwater during major raining seasons, and collection of rainwater in preparation for dryer periods.

In order to avoid food waste and/or a waste of inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, the number of seeds given to small households will be lesser than that given to larger ones. To avoid monocropping or an overgrowth of any one crop, a cap of ten seeds per crop will be ensured and all participants will be required to grow at least two of the different crops mentioned. At the end of the 15 week period, the crops planted on the 1000 square meter farm would be ready for harvest. These crops will be sold at a fair price, calculated as 10% less than the market price at the time, regardless of market fluctuations, to community members, organizations, market traders in the community. Selling to market traders is common practice and can be easily undertaken as some community members are traders themselves. The money accrued will be used to purchase inputs for the next farming season/cycle, and to ensure the continuous working of the project. The project manager will be in charge of managing the funds obtained from the sale of crop.

Philip Selorm Kayku will assume the project manager position and will continue to lead and guide the project for the foreseeable future. We have been given access to farm the land for three years, within which time more individuals will be taken on to be trained on the farm. The long-term goal is to ensure that every household in the East Adenta community grows a sustainable food garden.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS: All participants will have the necessary personal protective equipment while in training/working on the farm. Covid-19 rapid tests kits will be made available with participants tested before the start of the project and/or when necessary. Two toilet units will be acquired on site at the farm for use by participants.

ABOUT PRISCILLA

I spent most of my childhood and high school summer holidays working on my parents’ farm in Akatsi, located in the Volta Region of Ghana. Working on the farm introduced me at an early age to the economics and physics of agriculture, but it was during my classes at Skidmore that I fully appreciated the social and political constraints of growing food and having access to food, especially in developing countries. In the summer of 2021, I worked as a project intern for ARocha Ghana in Kyebi, Ghana. ARocha is an environmental conservation organization that works to protect the natural environment while identifying alternative means of living for communities. It is my goal to use my education as an Environmental Studies major at Skidmore and my unique experiences as a Ghanaian to effect sustainable change in the world, starting with my community.

On this project, I will be working as the project manager to ensure the smooth running and implementation of the project’s goals. My work will include planning community workshops and
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Presentations, managing the project’s finances, and monitoring and guiding the overall progress of the project.

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