



Walking Together Initiative

By Settle Ghana | Accra – Ghana | West Africa



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Settle Ghana’s Goal is for a Ghana where Indigenous peoples and community members lives matter. A Ghana where Indigenous people and communities have a say to give, or withhold and determine how their natural resources, and that the state and multi-national institutions accord and recognize these rights. Many Indigenous peoples and communities have ancestral, cultural and spiritual ties to their land and resources that go beyond economic users and that are vital to their cultural heritage and the modern practices that bind them as a community. Sacred places, formations and objects may be located outside of the recognized boundaries of their communities.

The Indigenous people and communities of Ghana are particularly vulnerable to political forces and the region faces a range of pressures including a growing population, climate change, potential pollution from rapid and unregulated mining development, agricultural insecurity via a fluid business arrangement as well as increased and poorly coordinated civil infrastructure. The Walking together Initiative commenced the long road towards creating a sustainable future for the Indigenous people and communities of Ghana whilst also strengthening engagement and communication between Government and the Private Sector and traditional owners.

Settle Ghana completed an extraordinary initiative across Ghana that provided an unprecedented level of information and access to Indigenous Ghanaians towards their rights. The initiative covered more than 3049 kilometres to engage with more than 4400 people in some of the country’s most inaccessible and exploited regions.

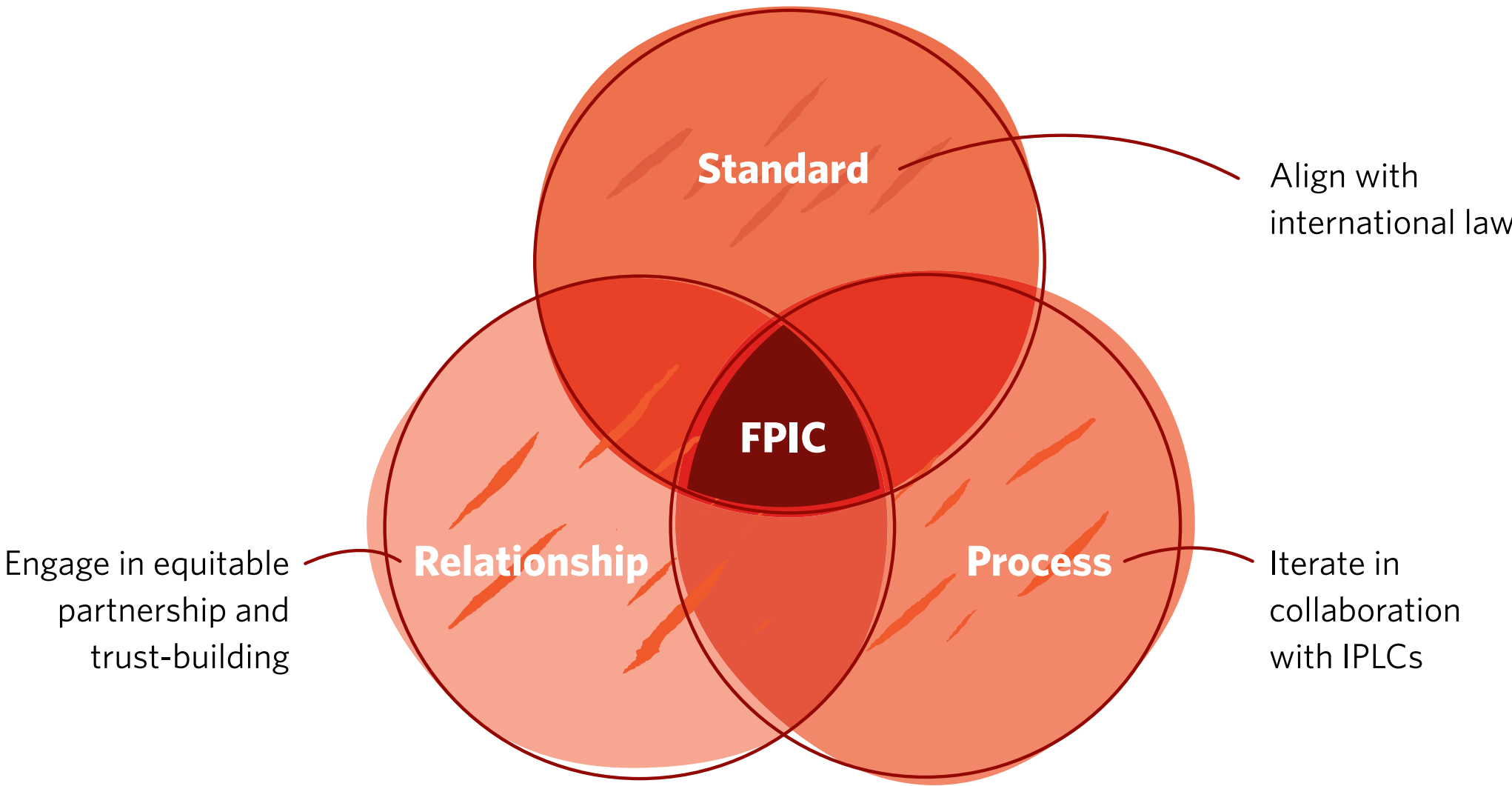
Community meetings were a combination of listening to concerns and sharing information. Settle Ghana used the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process and how it can be the vehicle for massive infrastructure more sustainable and inclusive development in their community.

Settle Ghana discussed tactics and strategies for implementing negotiating stronger deals using FPIC as a tool for change and empowerment. All communities were glad to learn about FPIC. The initiative recorded the information, findings and concerns of the communities engaged and the following key themes were identified:

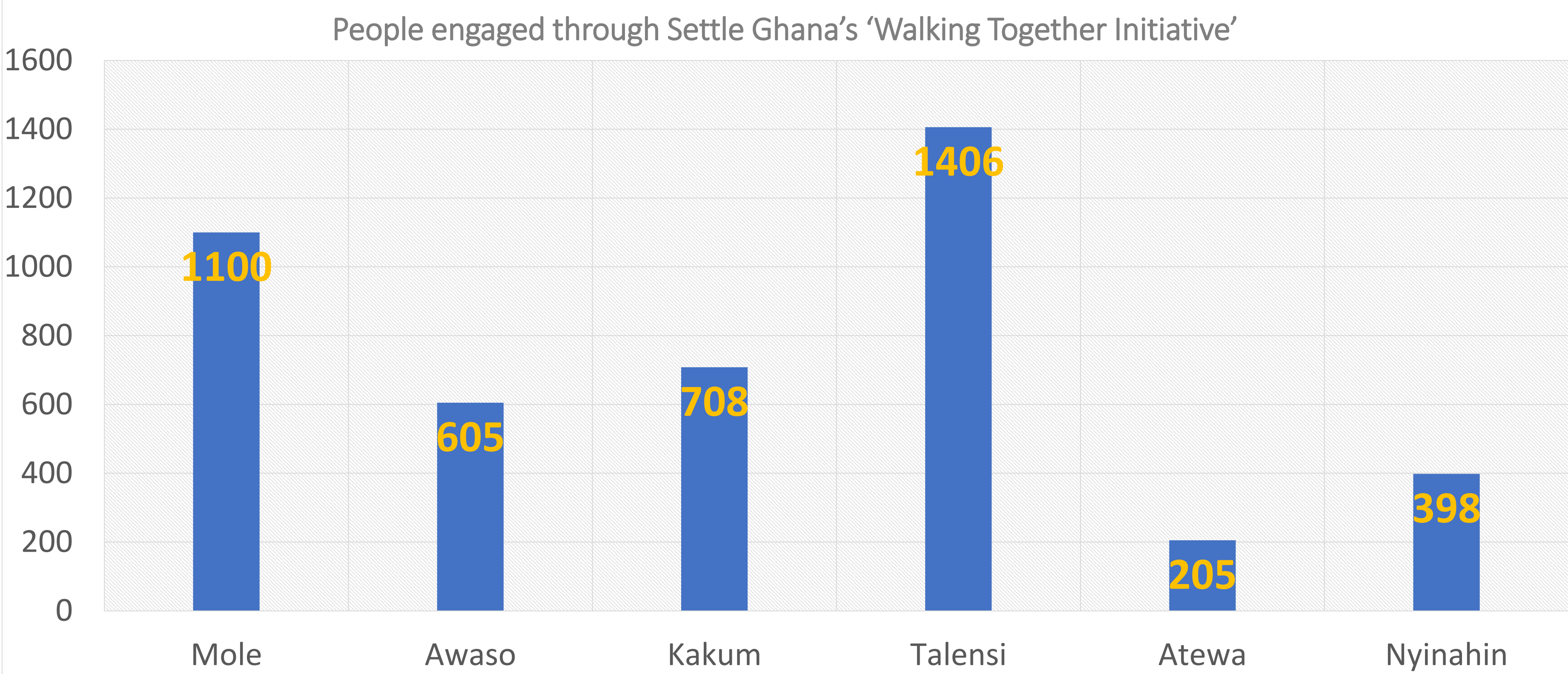
- The slow rate of development in the community.
- The women pleaded for alternative livelihood support.
- Unemployment rates (especially among women) were very high.
- Community requested school furniture and computers for their children.
- General concerns around health and wellbeing.

What is FPIC? Free, prior and Informed Consent – known as ‘FPIC’ – is an international standard protected by both Ghana’s national law and the legally binding human rights treaties to which Ghana is a party.

FPIC is a collective right which belongs to a whole community. It means that communities have a right to make informed decisions through their own freely chosen representatives and customary or other institutions and to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes that might affect their lands, territories and resources – whether the community as a deed for those lands or not.



Images above: Settle Ghana’s ‘Walking Together Initiative’ reached out to educate indigenous people on their lands and in their regions.



OUTCOME: The challenge facing the Indigenous people and communities of Ghana is enormous. An ideal situation would be for the Ghanaian Government to ensure that implementation of FPIC becomes a national law. Certification of bauxite mining which operate in Ghana to the Aluminum Stewardship Initiative (ASI) standards will enable bauxite mining as an industry to demonstrate their commitment to the social, environmental and ethical standards.

The Walking Together Initiative is being celebrated by Settle Ghana as a major milestone for the country’s Indigenous population and communities as well as a shining example of Settle Ghana’s capability to manage and delivered complex FPIC orientated project inside time, quality and budgetary framework.

RECOMMENDATION: Further investment towards an expanded initiative is now deemed reasonable a priority based on the demonstrated social, environmental and economic merit of this pilot project. Future investment in Settle Ghana would contribute to an already existing business framework and has a strong preliminary plan for implementation.

Based on this empirical evidence and social impacts of the Walking Together Initiative it is recommended that Settle Ghana be provided funding to commence Stage 3 to further develop their business, their programs and the positive social impacts to the Indigenous people and communities of Ghana.

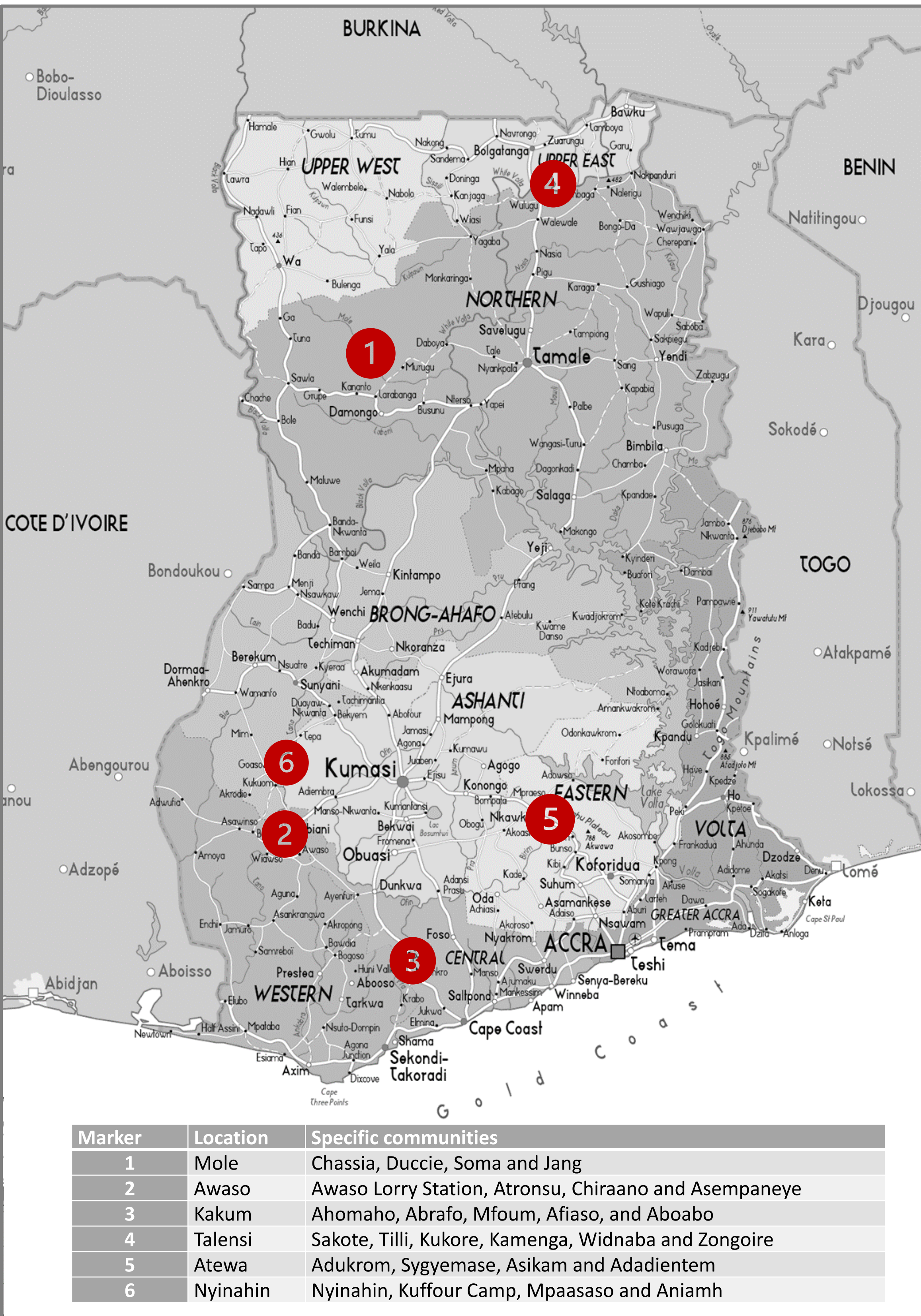


Illustration above: Map of Ghana and regions visited during the initiative.