



Report: Annual Staff Retreat 2022

By: Retreat Organizing Committee

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FACILITATORS | TRAINERS | CONSULTANTS | RESEARCHERS | EVALUATORS

✉ info@pdaghana.com 🌐 www.pdaghana.com 🐦 @pdaghana 📡 PDA Ghana

📞 00 233 (0)2081 29622 00 233 (0) 30 2252998/ 2970177 📺 PDA TV

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OVERVIEW OF 2022 STAFF RETREAT

The 2022 staff retreat was held from 10th – 13th January at the Green Height Hotel at Ada-Kasseh in the Greater Accra Region. The 3-day retreat featured discussions and presentations on the vision and mission of PDA in a fast-changing international development context and PDA is positioning itself to play an influential role in the development space, the new strategic themes for PDA that were launched in December last year and how they could be operationalized in the years ahead. The retreat also gave all the functional units with PDA the opportunity to take stock and reflection on their work in 2021 as well as share plans and opportunities to tap into in 2022 and beyond. The retreat further afford staff the opportunity to get to know each other well, created healthy and meaningful social connections, and bonding as staff worked from home for the whole of 2021. A total of 40 staff attended the 2022 annual staff retreat and contributed to the discussions and ideas generated. In the next sections, we outline the specific activities that were done on each day for the 3 days.

Retreat Objectives

The specific objectives of the retreat were given as follows:

- Familiarize with PDA values, culture, systems and practices
- Reflect on 2021, rethink our approaches and plan our focus for 2022 and beyond
- Provide an opportunity for staff to reconnect, and have fun learn from each other, and plan for 2022
- Reflect on PDA's 20 years journey, the anniversary activities and the next 20 or more years ahead
- Discuss welfare issues - provident fund and welfare executives to meet new staff

DAY ONE – RECONNECTION

Day one started with introductions – an opportunity for staff to interact and reconnect with one another through various participatory exercises. Again, staff also made input into the content of the retreat through sharing of their individual expectations for coming to the retreat.

Discussion on PDA's New Strategic Themes 2022-2027

Following the introductory sessions, we moved into one of the substantive discussions for the retreat – discuss and reflections on PDA's new strategic themes launched in December 2021. The discussions and reflections were led by Clement Sefa-Nyarko – Research, Evaluation and Learning (REL) Manager for PDA. Clement noted that there was the need to review the organization's strategic themes to understand our progress over the years and to chart new courses towards making greater impact in the organization's thematic areas of work. He also noted that the strategic themes also allow everyone to think about what the organization wants to achieve within a period of time. It defines the organization's direction; it fashions some pathway for the organization, and also to know where to channel resources to get more projects, and make impact. It is usually prepared to span about 5 years. During the 2021 retreat, staff deliberated on the previous themes and made modifications to reflect what the organization wants to do within the next five years.

The deliberation result in settling on the following 8 themes:

- Community-driven development and demand for accountability in service delivery
- Youth empowerment to generate positive development on their communities
- Promoting empowerment and experiential forms of learning
- Child rights and social protection
- Good governance and political stability
- Climate change and environmental sustainability
- Agribusiness, improved agriculture and climate change
- Financial inclusion and access to finance

Breakout Sessions

After the plenary overviews and context, staff were made to breakout into 4 groups and each group was tasked to further discuss two of the strategic themes around the two questions below;

- What has been done/achieved on the strategic themes? (An assessment of the 2016-2021 themes - project-wise).

- What can be done to help achieve/make greater impact on the 2022-2027 strategic themes? (Areas and ideas the organization can target to align projects with strategic themes)

Group 1

- Theme 1: Community-driven development and demand for accountability in service delivery

What has been done

The group members outlined a number of projects that are aligned to this theme

1. CDD I am aware – a social accountability project to improve public services delivery
 2. VSLA GALS – financial inclusion and gender mainstreaming in communities
 3. Youth Forward Initiative – generating evidence to inform youth-focused programs to build capacities of young people to take up job opportunities
- Theme 2: Youth empowerment to generate positive development on their communities

What has been done

1. Phonics by phone – to improve numeracy, literacy and learning outcomes for school children
2. IDH Cocoa Nutrition Project – to improve livelihood resilience and nutrition of cocoa farming households

Things/ideas to consider

1. The group noted that little to no attention has been given to food security, and water and sanitation. They suggested the organization streamlines some of its projects in these areas.
2. With projects that seek to train and empower young people economically, the youth should be linked to organizations/programs where there is opportunity to grow and practice what they are trained in (Internship opportunities)

Group 2.

- Theme 3: Promoting empowerment and experiential forms of learning

What has been done

1. Phonics by phone - component in the Yonkopa Child Labor Remediation project
2. VSLA-GALS - financial inclusion and gender mainstreaming in communities

Things/ideas to consider

1. PDA can develop community library programs which could also be incorporated into the VSLA programs. The library project will help encourage reading among children in remote areas.
2. The SDG Kids should be revived
 - Theme 4: Child rights and social protection

What has been done

- 1 Annual knowledge sharing workshop on child protection
- 2 Safeguarding project
- 3 VSLA-CHILD and child labor remediation programs
- 4 State of Child Protection Report

Things/ideas to consider

1. Re-introduce child rights projects in mining areas and have child protection champions in communities.
2. The video documentary on mental health among children should be used to sensitize the public on child mental health.
3. Set up youth parliament to enable young people speak about issues affecting them.

Group 3

- Theme 5: Good governance and political stability

What has been done

1. Public sector watch initiative together with CMAC
2. CDD I am Aware social accountability project (PDA is a learning partner) - project empowers citizens to demand accountability from leadership

Things /ideas to consider

Write articles/blogs/opinions on emerging governance issues. E.g on budgets and how they're going to impact the living standard of the citizenry.

- Theme 6: Climate Change and Environmental sustainability

What has been done

1. The sale of Gyapa coal pot
2. It was revealed that preliminary conversation has ensued between PDA/PASE and Open University, in transforming the by-products at PASE into renewable energy.

Things/ideas to consider

Increase awareness on citizens' contribution to climate change and how to improve it.

Group 4

- Theme 7: Agribusiness, improved agriculture and climate change

What has been done

1. PASE - nursery, training for farmers, using by product for renewable energy

Things/ideas to consider

1. Provide opportunity for persons with disabilities to be involved in the activities of PASE
2. Establish research center to research on climate change and train farmers on the impact of climate change on agriculture.
3. Produce bio-energy from the by-product

- Theme 8: Financial inclusion and access to finance

What has been done

1. VSLA-CHILD/GALS – promoting financial inclusion and gender empowerment among rural people, particularly women and children

Things /ideas to consider

Have a project sustainability plan for components like youth savings and loans association.

Summary of Discussions on Strategic Themes

Overall, it was observed that for some of the themes, the organization has done noticeably well, while others have received little attention. However, it was also noted that, PDA's work is largely demand-driven and mostly dictated by where the new work and income generating opportunities are. Therefore, why we strive to do well in all of the strategic themes, we are also guided by where our services are needed. However, PDA also has a record of initiating its own projects to drive some of themes we stand for and we will continue to do that as time and resources will allow.

PDA Vision, Mission within the Context of International Development

This session was facilitated by the Managing Director, Edem Agbe. He noted that, for the past 20 years, PDA has been working in the international development space as a social enterprise, and this has positioned the organization to be highly competitive. There are four major areas that have attracted the attention of development practitioners, and are dominating discussions surrounding international development.

These areas have also driven PDA to streamline its projects accordingly. The themes include:

Climate change and agriculture: This theme focuses on how communities can adopt effective measures in agriculture in the era of climate variability and change.

Access to finance and financial inclusion: PDA has been very keen on this theme, and a lot of projects have been commissioned to promote financial inclusion among vulnerable populations, youth, and the informal sector of the economy.

Growth of young people - youth unemployment challenges: Growth in digital jobs and how young people can leverage their skills for jobs. Also, focuses on government's youth employment programs, and how sustainable they are in reducing youth unemployment.

Child labor, forced labor, sustainability community for production: How PDA can adapt to remain relevant in the space

How to do these?

- Projects and programs
 - Build partnership and collaboration - bi-lateral partnerships, collaboration to co-create projects and solutions
 - Research
- Quality evidence and knowledge generation systems
- Knowledge sharing platforms
 - National child protection knowledge sharing platforms
 - Method space – a platform to document and share insights on research/evaluation methods, etc.

The 20th Anniversary in Retrospect

PDA has been working in the development space for more than 20 years now. The organization commenced activities last year to commemorate its 20 years of existence and contribution to the development industry in Ghana and beyond. At this year's retreat, the 20th anniversary committee engaged staff to assess the series of activities undertaken in 2021 to mark the anniversary to understand what went well, what didn't go well for staff and their suggestions for the future. The activities assessed were the launch of the anniversary – tree planting and book donation exercise in the Ahafo-Ano South-West District; the Child Protection Knowledge Sharing Workshop, and the 20th anniversary dinner and appreciation night. A breakout session was held for staff to discuss the successes, shortcomings and lessons learned;

Launching -Tree Planting and Book Donation Exercise

Successes

1. 100+ trees were planted at Potrikrom Basic school
2. Good media coverage
3. Donation of stationery to pupils in 3 basic schools in the area
4. Involving chiefs and community members was good
5. Nicely branded books to promote the organization

Shortcomings

1. Low participation from the community members
2. Lack of media coverage in the local dialect - only English-speaking channels reported on the program

Lessons Learned

Always engage community members ahead of time to participate in events like this

Child Protection Knowledge Sharing Workshop

Successes

1. Time keeping/management was well done at the event
2. Overall event organizing and coordination was good
3. Video documentary from the National Cybersecurity Authority also added value to the program
4. PDA documentary on the history of the organization in the context of child protection was very insightful.
5. One major issue/topic was discussed unlike previously where several issues were put together.
6. Good food served

Shortcoming

1. People did not listen to the plenary session. The session was dragged at the tail end
2. Delayed online streaming
3. Delay in event venue cleaning and set up

Lessons Learned

1. Make online streaming timely
2. Security issues must be improved
3. More time should be allotted for breakfast
4. Improve online participation

20th Anniversary Dinner and Appreciation Night Success

1. Fit-for-purpose venue; good music
2. Great planning
3. Good presentations were made
4. Good food served

Shortcomings

1. Limited time for travelers outside Accra
2. Event did not start on time as communicated
3. Minimal assistance in the clean-up of the venue after the event

Lessons Learned

1. Event should start on time.
2. Seating arrangement should be maintained; arrangement was meant to serve a purpose
3. Adequate time should be given to the team traveling from outside Accra to have enough rest before the event starts

DAY TWO – REVIEWS DAY

Units Presentations

Day two was dedicated to the review of PDA's works in 2021 through the various units and subsidiaries within the organization. This session saw leads of the various units presenting on the activities over the past 12 months. The presentations centered on overview of activities for the year under review (2021), and plans for the new year (2022). Presentations slides can be seen in the **Appendix**. The subsequent sections provide a summary of the presentations made by the units and subsidiaries.

PDA Agri-Industry and Social Enterprise (PASE)

Samuel led the team to present on behalf of PASE. He started by taking staff on a pictorial tour of the PASE processing facility. he also noted that, at the beginning of 2021, the SMT had a mini retreat to interact with the workers at the factory. Workers expressed their enthusiasm at the gesture from the senior management team and wish it will be repeated every year.

On PASE's core business, it was noted that the team faced myriad of challenges related to their work in 2021. The challenges included insufficient storage facility for the palm nuts, faulty separation machine, galamsey operation on the river nearby the farm, among others. There is also price competition from other big companies. These companies offer higher price for the FFBs than what PASE is currently offering leading to loss of customers. For this reason, PASE has stopped sourcing FFBs from Traboum because the farmers are not willing to sell to us.

In 2022, the PASE team plans to continue the farmer mobilization plan, establish a new nursery, plant about 50 acres of nursed palm trees at Boatengkrom, embark on farm maintenance, and produce about 100,000 tonnes of crude palm oil (CPO).

Research Evaluation and Learning (REL) Unit

Ernest led the presentation to provide updates for the REL team. He noted that the year 2021 featured a number of activities/projects which kept the unit running. Some of the activities include;

1. QuIP endline evaluation and preliminary data analysis in Ghana and DRC with Bath SDR
2. UNICEF/MoGCSP vulnerability and exclusion assessment in Ghana with ODI,
3. Beyond Beans' community needs assessment,
4. Afrikids needs assessment in northern Ghana,
5. Tony's Chocolonely Needs Assessment and living standards surveys in Ghana and Ivory Coast

6. Formative evaluation of the Sesame workshop pilot study in neglected tropical diseases in northern Ghana,
7. EdTech research on remote learning (radio and television) during covid-19 pandemic in Ghana for EdTech Hub,
8. Female-led MSME and covid-19 research with ODI for Mastercard Foundation,
9. Women economic empowerment study in Ghana for Euromonitor,
10. Summative evaluation and baseline studies for CNIP projects in Ivory Coast for IDH,
11. M&E support for the VSLA-CHILD and Nyonkopa projects,
12. Etc.

Going into 2022, the team will work as the Impact Partner Organization (IPO) the Mastercard Foundation's investments in Ghana; develop proposals and bid for new projects in research, evaluation and learning; build capacities of team through training in relevant research/evaluation/learning topics and skillset; develop PDA data management systems, embark on knowledge sharing through think and opinion pieces, etc.

Advocacy and Communication Unit

The ACU team was led by Aseda Mensah to present their review and plans for the new year. She remarked that 2021 was a good year for the team. During the year under review;

1. The 5th annual knowledge sharing workshop on child protection was organized, in partnership with the Department of Children and Child Online Africa.
2. The team also completed the evaluation of the Strengthening Community Based School Governance project,
3. Produced the PDA 20th anniversary documentary, and assisted with design of souvenirs.
4. Cases of child abuse were reported on the child abuse tracker and quarterly infographics were produced for advocacy purposes.
5. The team is finalizing works of the new website and hoping to launch it in 2022.

In 2022, the team plans to embark on the dissemination of the state of child protection in Ghana report, and also begin to think around producing the next edition. The 6th annual KSW will also be hosted in November, start works on method space, report child abuse cases, and also assist on the MCF IPO work.

Community-Driven Development (CDD) Unit

The activities of the unit were presented in parts by various leads heading the different projects being run by the unit. Below are the details of the different pieces of work presented.

Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA-CHILD): VSLA-CHILD is a child labor remediation initiative. Under this project, 62VSLA groups were formed by Kokoo Pa (KKP) under PDA supervision while PDA directly formed 38 groups

In 2021, the team embarked on various specific activities including;

1. Household development training for project field officers,
2. Field monitoring and partner visitation,
3. Workshops were hosted to introduce the VSLA-CHILD methodology to management of Barry-Callebaut,
4. The team also completed community entry and sensitization in Ivory Coast, and 21 VSLA groups have been formed.

Activities planned for 2022 include but not limited to, the endline survey for 100 VSLA-CHILD groups, share out for remaining 16 VSLA groups under VSLA-CHILD project, learning workshop for VSLA-CHILD and VSLA-GALS (Cameroon), gender training for Nyonkopa VSLA groups, formation of 80 VSLA-CHILD groups under ASAASE Project, and GALS training in Ivory Coast.

Child Labor Remediation Project: The Nyonkopa child labor remediation team also presented their activities and progress made in 2021. Among them were;

1. Support for birth registration for beneficiary children - about 952 have successfully been processed.
2. Educational materials in the form of exercise books, solar lamps, pens, mathematical sets were provided for 4090 children.
3. About 69 children out of the 140, who opted to learn a vocation have been processed, and the remaining will be enrolled later.

In 2022, the team intends to continue to support the VSLA groups, community action plans, complete the distribution of all outstanding birth certificates, and enroll the final batch of those interested in learning a trade on vocational training.

Finance and Administration Unit

Dzato led the finance team to present their updates. He noted that the year 2021 was a good year as the team was able to carry out its core mandate as expected with minimum setbacks. Specifically;

1. The team was able to work seamlessly on audit schedules which led to the timely preparation of audited financial statements.

2. The team prepared and presented general financial and project specific reports to Board and SMT.
3. It was remarked that working remotely with most programs staff was better this year.

The unit plans to improve upon the internal control systems, and also work more effectively by improving on its communication channels. It was recommended that the unit adopted a system to allow program staff in the Accra office to scan documents on financial retirement to the accounts for review before hard copies are delivered to them for record keeping.

DAY THREE – WELFARE AND RELAXATION

Message from Founders (Celia and Tony)

The day started with solidarity messages from the Founders of PDA. Tony and Celia congratulated the 20th anniversary committee for putting together the entire program including the dinner and appreciation night. They entreated all staff to continue to adhere to the covid protocols and take the vaccine. They also lauded the hard work of the SMT for steering the affairs of the organization. They further stated that staff should continue to work to ensure integrity, diligence, transparency, ownership and accountability in their line of work, as we grow to become a Pan-African organization. They encouraged staff to continue to produce quality work for partners, and be worthy ambassadors for the organization.

Provident Fund Meeting

The provident fund meeting was led by the trustees. They gave an overview of the fund by stating that the provident fund contribution is made by both the organization and the staff. 5% is deducted from staff salary, and the organization also contributes 5%. The scheme is managed by a three-member committee (trustees). The provident fund gives loans to member at very competitive interest rates. However, to qualify for a loan, one must contribute for a minimum of 6 months before they can be given loans. A contributor can have access to a maximum of GHS 30,000 and this is dependent on your take home salary. A financial report for the year 2021 was presented to members. Members of the fund were entreated to contact the trustees if they have concerns or questions about the management of the fund or if they want to know how much they have accumulated in their contributions.

Contributory Welfare Meeting

The meeting began with leadership welcoming all members. Ethel, the outgoing chairperson led in giving an overview of the staff welfare scheme at PDA. She noted that unlike the provident fund, membership of the welfare association is based on expression of interest and subsequent registration. Members make a flat rate contribution, and deductions are made monthly at source. She further stated that two of the executives had finished serving their terms in office, and there was the need to elect members to occupy the vacant executive positions. After the outgoing chairperson's presentation, the treasurer made a financial report to the members present. Helen moved for the acceptance of the financial statement, and was seconded by Ernest.

The outgoing chairperson brought to the attention of members the need to redefine group membership as only permanent staff are allowed to be members as espoused

in the constitution. To this end, Ernest proposed that permanent staff should be defined in the constitution as an individual who has a contract duration of 3 years minimum. Arnold also suggested that permanent staff should be defined in the constitution as an individual who has a contract duration of 2 years minimum. By consensus, it was therefore agreed that permanent staff be defined as an individual who has a contract duration of 2 years minimum.

Election of new executives

Helen made a submission that, upon consultation with Edem (a member), it was agreed that Alex be nominated to occupy the chairperson position to manage the affairs of the association. Members present at the meeting also nominated David for the chairperson position, but he declined. With regards to the secretary's position, Victoria Ampiah and Lucy Ofori Davis were nominated, and the results are captured below:

Secretary Position

Victoria Ampiah – 18 votes

Lucy - Lucy – 13 votes

Victoria was therefore elected as the Secretary to take over from Zayan

Chairperson

Alex

On this note the newly elected secretary adjourned the meeting until further notice.

RETREAT EVALUATION

At the end of the three-day retreat, staff were asked to evaluate the activities carried out. The anonymous evaluation was done using mentimeter to understand from staff what went well and what didn't go well for the retreat.

What went well

1. Good food, training sessions, and facilitation
2. High participation from staff in all activities
3. Diverse opinions were respected
4. Relaxed environment for both new and old staff to express themselves
5. Good bonding
6. Good presentations
7. Timeliness of snacks and lunch
8. Closing time was respected

What did not work well

1. The entertainment was not well organized
2. The evening activities were not time-bound
3. The first day evening activity was boring
4. The water at the hotel was salty

APPENDIX

Program Outline

ANNUAL STAFF RETREAT

VENUE: GREEN HEIGHTS HOTEL, ADA KASSEH

DATE: 10TH - 13TH JANUARY, 2022

Program Outline

Objectives:

- To familiarize staff with PDA values, culture, systems and practices.
- To reflect on 2021, rethink our approaches and plan our focus for 2022 and beyond
- To provide an opportunity for staff to reconnect, have fun, learn from each other and plan for 2022.
- To reflect on PDA's 20 years journey, the anniversary activities and the next 20 or more years ahead
- To discuss staff welfare issues – Provident Fund and Welfare executives to meet with staff

DAY ONE: 10th JANUARY, 2022 (THE RECONNECTION)

TIME	ITEM	Objective	LEAD
9:00am – 11:00am	Welcome, Introductions & Reconnection	Get to reconnect with ourselves, Overview of the retreat, goals and Agenda and ground rules & expectations of the meeting, housekeeping arrangements	Alex/Victoria/Helen
11:00am to 11:20 am	Snack Break		
11:20am – 11:40pm	Our vision and mission in a changing global development context	Take a look at PDA, our core mandate, values and support systems to work effectively.	Edem/Helen
11:40pm – 12:40pm	The 20 th anniversary in retrospect – Reflections and recollection	A look back at our 20 th anniversary celebration to date – activities organized, successes chalked in the past 20 years, knowledge shared, lessons learned, remaining activities in 2022 and the post-anniversary era, etc.	Anniversary Committee/SMT

12:40pm – 1:40pm	Lunch		
1:40pm – 3:10pm	A look at PDA's new strategic direction/themes for the next 5 years and beyond	a reflection on the new strategic themes and what it means for our work going forward. A reflection on strategies and approaches to effectively operationalize the strategic themes	Edem/SMT
3:10pm – 4:10pm	Presentation on health and wellbeing	Presentation on wellness covering all aspects health and wellbeing in an era of a pandemic, working from home and in the office, work-life-balance and human health/wellbeing, mental health, etc.	A health professional to present (via zoom)
4:10pm – 4:30pm	Recap and learnings from the day	A summary of the day's activities and major learnings, takeaways from staff	Alex/Victoria
4:30pm	Closing		
6:00pm to 7:30pm	Evening Event	Entertainment team to decide	Entertainment team

DAY TWO: 11th JANUARY, 2022 (REVIEW DAY)

9:00am – 9:30am	Reflections from day 1	a recap, reflections and overnight thoughts from day 1	Facilitator
9:30am – 10:30am	The year 2021 in retrospect	Introduction to the purpose of reviews and reflection on activities of the units in PDA – Highlights from units, lessons learnt in working from home in a global pandemic and recommendations for the future	Edem/SMT
10:30am – 11:10pm	Unit Updates	PASE: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	PASE team
11:10am – 11:30 am	Snack Break		
11:30pm – 12:10pm	Unit Updates	REL Unit: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	REL team
12:10pm – 12:50pm	Unit Updates	Advocacy & Communication Unit: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	ACU team
12:50pm – 1:30pm	Unit Updates	CDD Unit: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	CDD team
1:30am – 2:30pm	Lunch		
2:30pm – 3:10pm	Unit Updates	PSS: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	PSS team
3:10pm – 3:50pm	Unit Updates	Admin & Finance Unit: Reflections and Performance in 2021 and approaches/plans into 2022	Finance/Admin team
3:50pm-4:30pm	Management Updates	New ideas on the table, Policy directions, message/updates from Board/management to	SMT

		staff, etc.	
4:30pm	Closing		
6:00pm-7:30pm	Evening Event	Entertainment team to decide (a movie night?)	Entertainment team
DAY THREE: 12th JANUARY, 2022 (Welfare and Relaxation)			
8:00am – 9:00am	Welfare meetings – contributory welfare for staff	Contributory welfare committee members meet with staff who are members to share updates for the past year, elect new committee members if applicable and discuss any updates/changes where necessary	Staff contributory welfare committee members
9:00am – 10:00am	Welfare Meetings – Provident Fund (PF)	PF management members meet with the entire staff to share updates on the PF for the year and discuss changes where necessary	PF management members
10:00am – 5:00pm	Staff time out for leisure and pleasure	Entertainment team to decide (a visit to Shai Hills Game/Resource Reserve?)	Entertainment team

Presentation Slides

Click [this](#) to access the presentation slides