

theadvocate envisages a **well-informed** society where **democracy** is stronger, **services** are more efficient, **corruption** is exposed, **the poorest** are better served and **good governance** is recognized and respected.

theadvocate

promoting inclusive development



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PERSPECTIVES

Mbeki on Indigenization

Zimbabweans are now talking about indigenization and I can see that there is a big storm brewing about indigenization. But what is wrong about indigenization?

What is wrong with saying: "Here we are, as Africans, with all our resources. Sure, we are ready and very willing to interact with the rest of the world about the exploitation of all these resources, but what is the indigenous benefit from the exploitation of this, and even the control?"

You have seen examples of this, all of us have, when Chinese companies- in terms of all this theory about free markets- have sought to acquire U.S. firms [and] they got prohibited. "No, [it is] indigenization of U.S. intellectual property. We can't allow it to be owned by the Chinese, so No!"

So when the Africans say "indigenization," why is this strange notion?

And yet when we talk about solutions to Africa's development, one of the issues that we have to address is exactly this indigenization. How are we utilizing our resources to impact positively on African development?

As Africans we are concerned about our renaissance, our own development, and we must as indigenous people make sure that we have control of our development, our future- and that includes our resources. And therefore indigenization is correct.

*Thabo Mbeki, at a lecture at University of South Africa.
This is our standpoint*



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Half of North Gonja Suffers from Liver Diseases

75% of Ghana's population across the country is living with HBV

Joseph Ziem, DABOYA

Almost half of the population of the newly created North Gonja District of the Northern Region of Ghana has been infected with two types of the deadly liver diseases – Hepatitis B Virus and Hepatitis C Virus.

While an estimated 25 percent of the population suffers from Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), another 20 percent suffers from Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).

According to a health official at the Daboya Polyclinic in the overseas district, who pleaded anonymity in an interview with the **advocate**, a recent screening conducted revealed that the two types of liver diseases were very rampant in the area, particularly among young people.

Inhabitants also confirmed that a lot of their young men and women were dying of the epidemics and appealed to the government to immediately intervene in order to save lives.

According to a health NGO, Theobald Hepatitis B

Foundation, 75% of Ghana's population across the country is living with HBV. While one out of five Ghanaians is infected by HBV, several calls had been made to the Ghana Aids Commission in recent years to work towards integrating HBV in HIV/AIDS campaign. This was because, the disease was far higher than the prevalence of HIV, but awareness was inexplicably very low and the majority of those infected were unaware.

Furthermore, Theobald reported that one in 12 Ghanaians is living with a chronic (life-long) HBV, and one in four of those living with chronic HBV will die from liver cancer or liver failure. The good news

however is that the effects could be avoided or prevented with appropriate education, monitoring and treatment.

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Minister of Health, Hon. Sherry Ayittey

Titbits

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EDITORIAL

Stand Up To Politicians

Hi there! We are back! Yes theadvocate is back after a long sojourn in oblivion. Back, to pick it from where we bowed out. Our mission remains unchanged: To articulate the needs and aspirations of citizens, promote inclusive development and advocate for pro-poor policies and programmes.

This mission derives from the social and economic turbulence that the nation is wading through since independence. After Ghana's bold and ambitious initiative, under Kwame Nkrumah, to industrialize, fast track education, improve public health services and build a knowledgeable and skillful manpower base for comprehensive development, the nation slowed down to palpable misplacement of priorities, mismanagement, brazen corruption and absolute indifference to the hopes and aspirations of Ghanaians.

All these canker have prevailed under successive governments – both military and civilian. The world has moved on since independence though; moved into a global village where the destiny of a people is hinged on the whims and greed of their former colonial masters and skewed on a new economic order that has left nations on this side of the planet reeling in abject poverty and conflict.

Different shades of unpalatable and inappropriate economic models are shoved down our throats by the Breton Wood institutions which our so-called intellectuals not only swallow, hook-line-and-sinker, but also glorify to the detriment of the unsuspecting masses.

So, what do we see? A nation where the national interest has been thrown to the dogs by politicians who scramble to power on the backs of naïve, but trusting and hopeful, electorates who go to sleep after elections. And, by so doing, the dozing electorates have given the politicians a field day to plunder national wealth in the name of governance.

Governance of exclusion! Policies are formulated without the participation of target groups. Ministers and policy makers gallivant around a couple of regions, meet with a selected few and conclude that there has been public participation in policy formulation and programmes.

Members of Parliament cocoon themselves in the cozy comfort of parliament and pretend to represent the interest of their gullible constituents.

District Assemblies wait for the common fund to disburse to their cronies and party apparatchiks for a couple of shoddy projects. Assembly members, most of who do not understand their roles and responsibilities, have to virtually bootlick to be recognized for assistance. Government parastatals and institutions have become bastions of indolence and nonchalance.

The hands of serious civil society organizations are tied as their efforts at seeking the co-operation of government institutions to implement programmes of mutual and widespread benefit to society are frustrated.

It is high time the electorates stood up to the politicians. Let them demand participation in public policy formulation and implementation. Let them demand transparency and accountability of politicians and public officials in an organized and sustained manner. And let the politician and public officials commit themselves to those values and not pay mere lip service. That way, we can develop a better Ghana.

Half of North Gonja Suffers from Liver Diseases

Contd. from frontpage

The Chief of Daboya, the district capital, Wasipewura Kabasaya Anyame II also appealed to the government to endeavour to equip the Polyclinic in the area with more staff and infrastructure to enable personnel to provide the services expected of a standard polyclinic.

According to the Chief and people of Daboya, there were a lot of

maternal and infant deaths in the hinterlands most of which were inaccessible due to poor road networks that somehow hampered commuting by cars and motorbikes. This assertion was corroborated by health officials in the district.

Wasipewura II also expressed concern over the lack of accommodation for staff of the newly created

district and called on the government to make that its top priority since workers posted to the area did not have a place to lay their heads.

Meanwhile, the North Gonja District with a population of over 18,000 has no single tarred road network, no ambulance, laboratory, motorbikes and offices for its health centre as well as accommodation for staff.

Types of Hepatitis Viruses

There are five main types of hepatitis viruses and they include types A, B, C, D, and E. The most common types are the A, B, and C. Of

the three, only the B type has a vaccine.

HBV is a blood-borne viral disease caused by a virus and is one of the most common

infectious diseases in the world. It can be acute or chronic. Most healthy adults (90%) who are infected recover and develop protective antibodies against future HBV infections. A small number (5-10%) are unable to get rid of the virus and develop chronic infections.

Unfortunately, this is not true for infants and young children – 90% of infants and up to 50% of young children infected with HBV develop chronic infections.

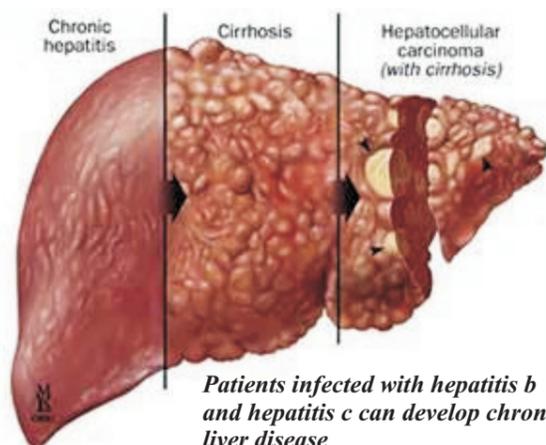
Therefore, vaccination is essential to protect infants and children. The virus is passed from an infected person to another through blood and body fluids like semen. Only about 30 percent of people with HBV have any symptoms. Staggering statistics from the World Health Organization (WHO) has revealed that 600,000 people die each year worldwide, due to acute or chronic HBV.

HCV is also a liver disease caused by a virus. HCV

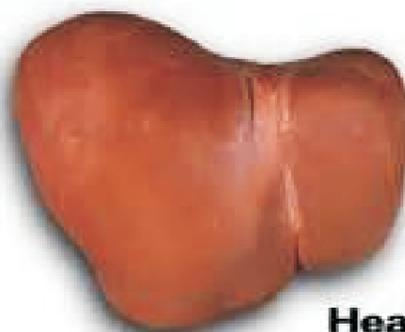
infection sometimes results in an acute symptomatic illness. It can range in severity from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, chronic condition that can lead to cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

Unlike HBV which is transmitted sexually and through other means, HCV is only transmitted through contact with the blood of an infected person. According to the WHO, about 130 – 170 million people are chronically infected with HCV, and more than 350,000 people die from HCV-related liver diseases each year.

HCV infection is curable using increasingly effective antivirals. Despite ongoing research, there is currently no vaccine to prevent HCV infection. It is estimated that 3 – 4 million people are infected with HCV each year globally.



Patients infected with hepatitis b and hepatitis c can develop chronic liver disease



Healthy



Cirrhosis

Function in Chronic Hepatitis B Patients with Decompensated Cirrhosis

Government Communication: Information Ministry Needs Rethinking

From **DEVELOPMENT DESK**

Government communication should be responsible for improving three principal elements of government: effectiveness -building broad support and legitimacy for programmes; responsiveness - knowing citizens' needs and responding to them; and accountability - explaining government stewardship and providing mechanisms to hold governments accountable.



Hon. Mahama Ayariga,
Minister for Information and Media Relations

“Government communication is more than reacting to public criticisms and making government look good in the public eye,” says Mr. Abdallah Kassim, the Executive Media Director of the Rural Media Network, a non-governmental development communication organization based in Tamale.

“It is interesting to watch the Minister of Information, Mr. Mahama Ayariga and his deputies, at various times, hold reporters to press briefings that espouse the cause of government and, sometimes, react to public outcry or respond to flaks from the opposition.”

According to Mr. Kassim, holding press briefings alone in Accra will not increase government accountability or citizens' confidence in the government. “Providing citizens with adequate information on priorities, programs, and activities at the district and community levels will enhance the legitimacy of the government and therefore stabilize national polity.”

He added that the current “meet the press” series by various ministries is a good initiative, but it must go beyond that. This, he said, requires a rethink of the Ministry of Information and Media Relations from mere press relations to a functional development communications outfit that thrives on effective public communication strategies to enable citizen participation.

Mr. Kassim observed that the nation lacks a culture of consultation and participation, and this is compounded by low literacy rates and lack of information provision. He stressed that enhanced citizen participation is a key indicator of effective government communication.

Communication Functions of Government

Mr. Kassim stated that government communication

should be responsible for improving three principal elements of government: **effectiveness** -building broad support and legitimacy for programmes; **responsiveness** - knowing citizens' needs and responding to them; and **accountability** - explaining government stewardship and providing mechanisms to hold governments accountable.

He said government communication has several dimensions, including providing useful and relevant information to citizens; listening to citizens and stakeholder groups; continuously learning from interactions with citizens and stakeholders; being truthful; shedding light on issues, adding value to public discussion and, above all, communicating with professionalism.

He posited that government communication involves not only sending out persuasive messages to the public, but also explaining working policies, creating awareness of the rights of citizens, and developing mechanisms that enable two-way communication between citizens and government.

However, he noted, “it is imperative to understand that government communication is not propaganda”.

Government Spokespeople

Mr. Kassim added that government communication is more than just developing effective spokespersons, it also involves the provision of citizen oriented services, and building capacity for citizens to provide government with feedback as regards these services. This requires generating and disseminating appropriate information, especially, regarding issues of transparency.

He said Government spokespersons are commonly seen as the mouthpieces of the political party in power, more of political instruments than civil servants tasked with the responsibility of providing citizens with information about

public programmes. In many cases, spokespersons play both roles.

“In this light, it is important to be clear about the kinds of information spokespersons should convey to the public and to be cognizant of the problematic nature of mixing the roles of a civil servant and politician.

“They can increase their credibility by communicating about policies and programs, not about politics or political offices. Ironically, credibility is also contingent on perceived access to power, influence, and up-to-date information. Therefore, spokespersons need to build relationships not only with the media, but also with various government agencies.

Information Services Department

Mr. Kassim noted that successive governments have reduced the Information Services Department (ISD) to a “mere directionless public announcement megaphone.” He urged the Ministry of Information and Media Relations to resource the ISD adequately to “develop and maintain effective communication capacity with citizens, to better take stock of their needs and preferences, and to foster more deliberative public forums for multi-stakeholder participation, informed policy debate, and development effectiveness”.

He added that two-way communication between the government and the public – especially at the grassroots, using the ISD, will produce governance outcomes that are of higher quality and more sustainable. “Consulting and engaging the public should not be limited to elections, crises, and politically risky issues. Showing citizens that the government is listening may be as important as actually listening. In the long run, however, citizens need to see that their input is being taken seriously”.

SADAtoday

SADA Must Not Fail - RUMNET

"What will make SADA a success is the ownership the people of the area will feel towards it. It is about their development and they should not allow the SADA process to be bastardized through narrow, parochial party partisan lines. They should own it." -Alhassan Andani



President John Mahama: SADA on his heart

From **DEVELOPMENT DESK**

The Rural Media Network, RUMNET, has launched a project on the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA). It calls the project Community Awareness and Education Programme on SADA Project Interventions

(CAPSADA). The goal of CAPSADA is to increase stakeholder awareness of, and transparency in, SADA project interventions in the Northern Region.

RUMNET works with marginalized groups in Northern

Ghana to claim their rights to good governance, social services and economic resources, through inclusive development and strategic communication .

CAPSADA will strive towards its goal by not only increasing awareness and understanding of SADA and its intervention strategies among citizens of Northern Region but also advocate for transparency and accountability in on-going SADA project interventions. CAPSADA is supported by STAR Ghana with funding from DFID, DANIDA, EU and USAID.

CAPSADA will hold SADA to one of its key commitments, which is to embark on: 'Intensive awareness creation and information sharing programmes on SADA's financial, fiscal and regulatory incentives, and how communities and key stakeholders can benefit from, or take advantage of such incentives.'

For more than 40 years now, people of Northern Ghana have moaned and groaned about how they have been left behind; about how they have little resources; about the "yawning development gap" between the North and the South and about how they need donor intervention and equitable development.

Now they have the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA): an out-and-out vehicle for speeding up development of the northern ecological zone and catching up with the South.

SADA is an independent agency mandated by Act 805 of 2010 to coordinate a comprehensive development agenda for the northern savannah ecological zone. SADA is a positive venture that intends rapid, concentrated investment in strategic areas of the economy of Northern Ghana in a manner never before seen in the history of Ghana.

Ironically, SADA has used up four years of its 20-year life span and it is yet to find its feet. The Chief Executive Officer was hired and fired within 12 months while some of its management staff assumed office just in the first quarter of 2013.

SADA hit the ground running with a lucrative butternut business (reportedly initiated by the Northern Rural Growth Programme) and other snapshot projects; but just as this success

was about to be hailed, the organization inadvertently plunged into the controversial abyss of tree planting scandal and guinea-fowl rearing palaver.

SADA is riding on the vision of a "Forested and Green North by 2030". Its strategy entails a major paradigm-shift in promoting economic growth and sustainable development. It is ensuring that small-holder families and poor farmers develop a long-term stake in agriculture through inter-cropping with economic trees.

Revolving around this forested north are complimentary investments in roads, energy and water resources, education and health. It proffers short term food and livelihoods security measures that also address social protection and peace issues.

Paradoxically, up till now, majority of the people of the north do not know whether SADA is living up to the strategies it is supposed to implement. The SADA secretariat is not forthcoming; information on its activities seems to be classified.

Even most urban based CSOs do not understand what SADA is all about or what it is doing, how much more community based organisations, traditional authorities and rural communities. Of late, SADA has become popular for the wrong reasons. The lack of information about its operations opens it up to speculation and leaves its stakeholders in the dark.

Yet SADA states in its operational manual that: "The provision of information on available services and programmes both to participants and potential investors within Ghana and outside Ghana will be a crucial driver of the changes anticipated in the SADA development strategy framework. Such information may include that which will help participants as well as potential investors to make the appropriate decisions and choices." This is not happening.

Information

Information and communication are the life wire of any serious organization. It is imperative for SADA to embark on intensive awareness creation and information sharing programmes on its financial, fiscal and regulatory incentives and how people can benefit from or take advantage of such incentives for the development of their business.

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Tamale Teaching Hospital understaffed



Joseph Ziem, TAMALE

The Tamale Teaching Hospital (TTH) is understaffed. According to the Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the TTH, Dr. Prosper Akanbong, although the hospital is the only referral one in Northern Ghana, it lacks the manpower required of a standard teaching hospital

Speaking to The Northern TRIBUNE, he said the TTH lacked the “right mix of appropriate human resource” to make it fully functional. However, he noted that, there has been tremendous improvement in the past seven years.

Yet, Dr. Akanbong said the TTH still required more medical consultants, specialists, principal medical officers, resident doctors, among others, to augment the current staff strength of the various departments and also be able to provide the right training to housemen undergoing internship.

Currently, the TTH has 212 medical doctors, 120 house officers, 5 consultants, 10 specialists, 719 nurses (113 enrolled nurses, 546 professional nurses and 60 midwives) 50 laboratory personnel as well as 26 pharmacists.

He disclosed that, the TTH had expanded its housemanship to about 120 medical doctors which is too large a number for the few consultants at post. Even so, he commended the immediate past CEO of the TTH Dr. Ken Sagoe for playing a very instrumental role in facilitating the relocation of some committed and experienced consultants from elsewhere in the country to work with the hospital.

He attributed the challenges at the TTH to non-availability of specialized medical courses in the University for Development Studies Medical School and the TTH. He added that such facilities would have motivated many experienced medical personnel to accept postings to the hospital since it would afford them the opportunity to upgrade themselves in future.

The absence of a regional hospital to serve as a backup to the TTH, he observed, was further creating a lot of problems, such that patients with ailments meant for the former were compelled to go to the latter for treatment and this put a lot of pressure on limited facilities.

Dr. Akanbong hinted that, the hospital would have to consider starting some special courses locally in order to train doctors and nurses to become middle level personnel.

Dr. Akanbong said one of the feats of the TTH is an occasion in which one of the hospital's urologists saved the life of a young man who had a safety-pin stuck in his penis as a result of masturbation. This rare achievement he said drew a huge applause from the European Urology Association because the urologist performed a medical procedure under scarce resources.

He advocated for the establishment of a regional hospital to take care of simple medical problems like malaria, diarrhoea and headache, among others, which the TTH records mostly at its out-patient-department (OPD).

Dr. Akanbong also cited inadequate accommodation for staff is a serious challenge to the hospital.



Dr. Prosper Akanbong, CEO of TTH

One of the hospital's urologists saved the life of a young man who had a safety-pin stuck in his penis as a result of masturbation. This rare achievement he said drew a huge applause from the European Urology Association because the urologist performed a medical procedure under scarce resources.

Newscope

Hyping Girl child education could be detrimental to Boys – GJA Chairman

Joseph Ziem, TAMALE

The Northern Regional Chairman of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Caesar Abagali has warned that, the rate at which rights advocates were persistently advocating for the education of the girl child could adversely affect the education of the boy child in future.

He observed that, currently a lot of resources, time and attention were deliberately being devoted by government and, most especially, civil society to the empowerment of girls through education.

Although Mr. Abagali conceded that promoting girl child education was in the right direction, he noted that, if care was not taken a time would come when those advocating for girls would have to start doing same for boys.

“They are overemphasizing the importance of female education and relegating that of boys to the background. I can tell you that, many boys are increasingly losing interest in school and dropping out to engage in menial jobs”, he stated.

He continued: “I’m one of those who always hold the view that, if you are a beautiful girl but an illiterate, you’ll get an educated man to marry when you grow up. But the same cannot be said about a boy who is handsome but illiterate.”

Mr. Abagali who is also the acting Regional Manager of the Ghana News Agency, Northern Region, was speaking at a sensitisation and training workshop on child labour, in Tamale organized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in



Educating both boys and girls is important

collaboration with the Northern Regional chapter of the GJA for journalists.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to contribute to the implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) in Ghana through enhanced media advocacy.

The ILO National Programme Manager for Ghana Kwame Mensah said, in Ghana over one million children were involved in child labour particularly in agriculture, manufacturing, mining, child domestic servitude, kayayei, streetism and commercial sexual exploitation among others.

He charged journalists to take keen interest in child labour issues by learning about it so as to

enable them educate the public very effectively on the rights of children and its effects on society.

Participants were trained on how to effectively report on child labour issues using the right terminology; developing interest in child rights, child protection and child labour reporting and social mobilisation; understanding and overcoming the challenges involved in child labour reporting.

Mr. Kwame Mensah, said the media was a key outlet of information and education. Both traditional and new media, he said, had become almost indispensable tools for information dissemination and social mobilisation.

Mr. Mensah however observed that, many media

practitioners had no thorough understanding of child labour issues, adding “They have little grasp of the concept and the various types of child work; the factors involved in the definitions relating to the different forms of child labour as well as the incidence, scope and consequences of the problem.”

He stated that, generally, journalists were unaware of the international, national and local legal frameworks and intervention policies, programmes and projects existing to address the issue of child labour. “The knowledge gap of journalists in this regard hampers their ability to effectively promote efforts to combat child labour”, he pointed out.

community VOICES

Rural Women Enroll in Basic Science Course on Climate Change

“ We have not been to school but we are learning science” -Tipoa

Francis Npong,
ZAMBULUGU

“We are not learning in order to sit for exams, but to understand the basic science of nature and environment,” says Tipoa Adjei, one of the more than 650 rural Ghanaian women who have never had formal education. They are enrolled in a programme that teaches them some basic science as part of preparations for effective climate change adaptation.

Dubbed “Community Based Adaptation (CBA)”, the

project is being implemented by CARE International, a non-profit humanitarian organization. It is part of CARE's efforts at equipping rural farmers, particularly women, who are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, with basic education on the environment and agriculture.

According to Tipoa, her local community, Zambulugu and its adjoining communities have been experiencing food shortages for the last few years, but could not explain the prevailing changes in the weather.

“Farmers expect rains that never come”, Tipoa explains, and when the rains

come, it fluctuates. This makes preparing our farmlands and sowing crops very difficult”. The farmers, she said, had consistent crop failure and minimum yields that threatened their livelihoods and food security.

“We used to think that our gods were angry with us,” Tipoa says. “Now that we have learnt from science that human activities play a major part in the current weather situation there is the need for us to look for new ways to cope. Learning basic science is part of that.”

Tipoa says women are becoming more vulnerable to economic, social and natural disasters. “Just when we are about to pick up and rub

shoulders with our male counterparts, climate change seems to be derailing that effort.

“Farming has been extremely disappointing, so we are looking for alternative ways to sustain our livelihoods,” Tipoa says. “That’s why we have to integrate basic learning of climate science with the diversification process.”

According to her, as a result of the CBA programme, women in the communities are already changing their attitudes towards the exploitation of the environment and the improvement of their livelihoods. Their participation in the CBA process has enhanced their decision making and given them several options to fall on.

Tipoa says excitedly: “Today, Zambulugu has a rain gauge, climate change-resilient livelihood activities, a disaster risk management plan, local adaptive capacity and the know-how to analyze underlying causes of our vulnerability”.

The Advocacy Manager of Care International Ghana, Baba Tahiru says the CBA approach hinges on four key elements: promoting climate-resilient livelihood strategies; building capacities of local and public institutions; disaster risk reduction strategies and addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability through social mobilization for empowerment and advocacy to influence policies enactment and implementation.

Although Ghana contributes little to climate change through its low carbon emissions, the country is bearing the brunt of the consequences of a warming climate. As Tahiru put it, “Climate change does not discriminate, but the fragile group of persons, particularly women, suffer the most because their activities are directly linked to their livelihood.”



Tipoa and her classmates in a climate science class by M&E officer Thomas Ayamga

Impact

Farmers on the path to climate change resilience

Joseph Ziem, **WALEWALE**

The livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the West Mamprusi District of Ghana are persistently being destroyed by the negative effects of climate change. The area has been described by environmental experts as prone to perennial flooding caused by the overflow of the Bagre and Kompianga dams of Burkina Faso.

Desertification, environmental degradation, bush burning, bad farming practices and indiscriminate felling of trees are some of the factors destroying the livelihoods of farmers. As a result, communities find it almost impossible to feed their families after every cropping season.

Some of the communities are Sayoo, Zangum, Nayoku, Guakudow and Guabuliga.

Besides, rising temperatures, less predictable rainfall and shorter growing seasons are all making it harder for farmers—especially women—to support their families. Women are disproportionately affected by the challenges of changing climate.

Peasant farmers are constantly faced with negative environmental practices such as bush burning, indiscriminate felling of trees and charcoal production perpetrated by other community members, thus further compounding the problems affecting all of them.

However, a 15-month project dubbed “*Expanding Climate Change Resilience in Northern Ghana (ECCRING)*” is beginning to bring back hope to the farmers. The project is

being implemented by Northern Ghana's Association of Church-Based Development NGOs (ACDEP) through the Zasilari Ecological Farms Project (ZEFP), a local non-profit organization.

There are 1000 individual smallholder farmers benefitting from the project which began early this year. It involves 200 farmers from each of the five communities: Sayoo, Zangum, Nayoku, Guakudow and Guabuliga. The core part of this project is geared towards not only strengthening beneficiaries' efforts with tools, seeds, livestock, new farming techniques and other inputs, but also developing their capacity to participate in shaping their communities.

At Guabuliga, one of five communities where the ECCRING is being implemented, there were

palpable indications that the future will be bright for the beneficiary communities if the intervention is carried through.

Musah Bunbura, a peasant farmer, told this reporter that “the coming of ZEFP with ECCRING into Guabuliga has brought a lot of opportunities and support in terms of capacity building and improved seeds ranging from maize, soya beans and cowpeas for farmers to sow and reap within a short period.”

According to him, the project assisted him as well as other farmers with money to access tractor services, thus expanding the size of his farm. “Considering the one acre of maize I planted this year, I think I will reap more than what I used to reap from my five acres.”

He also said he was hopeful of the future because the ruminants given to farmers will reproduce for them to sell to address family problems such as payment of children's school fees, medical bills as well as establish income generating activities.

Musah, like Oliver Twist, however appealed to ZEFP to consider providing all beneficiaries with direct tractor services in the next rainy season, adding that “I also wish every farmer is given a donkey and cart to enable him carry compost manure to their farms since the distance between their homes and their farms is so long.”

Issahaku Tani, a 35-year old farmer and business woman is also a beneficiary and according to her, she was given money to cultivate an acre of soya beans and two goats to rear.

“I am very hopeful of a booming business this year”, she said, adding “I'll get more soya beans to prepare soya beans kebab to sell and make money.”

“They also trained me and other women in soap making”, she disclosed and appealed to the NGO to assist them with start-up capital and tools to go into soap production.

According to the Project Coordinator Issifu Sulemana

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Over-Deduction of Common Fund Affecting Assemblies

From Our
Upper East Correspondent

Disbursement of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) is so bedeviled by a myriad of anomalies that it is adversely affecting District Assemblies in the discharge of their development obligations.

A study carried out by SEND Ghana showed that apart from over deduction of allocations to the districts by the Common Fund Secretariat, the districts themselves have misapplied and misappropriated the funds.

SEND Ghana is a research NGO that monitors pro-poor policies of Government and offer appropriate suggestions to correct any anomaly. In 2013 it undertook the research on the DACF themed: "Managing Public Finance for Effective Local Development" covering 48 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in four administrative Regions including the Northern, Upper East, Upper West and Greater Accra Regions. These regions were selected based on their relative poverty situation.

The research also revealed that some of the districts indulged in a number of irregularities regarding procurement, taxation and award of contracts. The districts were cited for starving their stakeholders of information on budgets and hardly consulting and involving them in decision making at the assemblies.

According to the Local Government Act 1993, all monies

received from the DACF should be channeled solely through development projects of the various MMDAs but this is grossly flouted by most of the MMDAs, as shown by the research findings.

The research findings were presented to Stakeholders in the Upper East Region at interface meetings on the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) held at separate functions in all the Districts in the Region.

The stakeholders included Presiding Members, District Coordinating Directors, Assembly Members, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) Opinion leaders and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) among others. They confirmed the research findings, saying it reflected exactly the situation in their various districts in the Region.

The District Coordinating Director for Garu Tempene, Mr. Abudulai Abubakar admitted that sometimes misapplication and cash irregularities do happen. He stated, for instance, that sometimes one is forced to apply part of the common fund to the Poverty Alleviation Fund. When that happens, it becomes difficult to refund the monies to the common fund.

In the Builsa North District for instance, the stakeholders confirmed the over deductions of the DACF by the Common Fund Secretariat in the form of statutory and non-statutory obligations. He

stressed that "the district gets only about half of its share of the DACF in a year making it impossible to meet the development needs of the district"

In almost all the MMDAs some of the Assembly members said they had not been invited to many of their assembly meetings; and they had never taken part in district action planning meetings, procurement consultations nor had access to budget documents.

The Presiding Member for the Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly, Donatus Nyaba said: "I first commend SEND-Ghana for their effort; I have no doubts about the report findings. It is quiet true that most assembly members do not have access to the district budget and the Auditor General's report. I thought it was because I am new as a Presiding Officer that I do not have access to information on such issues. This meeting just educated me, as a Presiding Member, of the DACF."

The situation was not different in the Bawku West District. Some of the Assembly Members complained bitterly about their non-involvement in the decision-making process pertaining to the DACF.

"An assembly person can only work effectively if he or she is aware of what is happening. In our case decision making about

DACF is not holistic. We are only sometimes told about what we will be given and not the cost involved and how deductions are to be made", they stressed.

Another scenario was in Bongo where Assembly members said there were instances where they were not aware of projects to be executed in their communities especially those that were externally funded and mentioned the GETFUND projects as one of the examples. Two communities - Apuwongo and Dua- were cited as examples of places where bridges were constructed without prior information to assembly persons. Efforts made by the said assembly persons to report to the assembly were futile since they never met any of the top officials at the assembly.

Among some of the suggestion put forward by the stakeholders included training and orientation programmes for District Assembly stakeholders; communities should be assisted to form functional unit committees. They also suggested the need for the involvement of all stakeholders in drawing up district action plans.

Meanwhile, in an interview with the Regional Planning and Economic Officer of the Regional Coordinating Council, Mr Philip Yinbil, he conceded that there could be an element of truth in the findings since no human institution is totally perfect. But he disagreed with the magnitude of the issues raised.

He explained that even though per the guidelines of the DACF, the allocation of the funds were meant for development of the Districts, it also gives room for the MMDAs to use 20 per cent for their recurrent expenditure and utilize 15 per cent for office and residential accommodation particularly with regards to the newly created District Assemblies.

He said the co-ordinating council, which monitors the activities of MMDAs- particularly the DACF, would continue to double its efforts to ensure that the funds were used judiciously to develop the region.



Hon. Akwasi Opong-Fosu,
Minister for Local Government,
Rural Development and Environment



Our Country Our Future with Abdallah **KASSIM**

Delivering Good Governance through Citizen Participation

We, the people of Ghana, declared and affirmed in the preamble of our constitution that all powers of government spring from the “sovereign will of the people”. As a result, we have committed ourselves to the universal adult suffrage; in other words, we will place and replace governments through the exercise of our franchise – voting in elections.

However, as Carlos Santiso - Senior Programme Officer of International IDEA – observed: “Elections do not equal democracy”. Democracy is more than elections. What happens between elections – **governing** – is equally important for a vibrant democracy. We have opted for democratic governance – which they say, is a “form of government in which sovereign power resides in the people and is exercised by them or by officers they elect to represent them”

Apparently, democratic governance, if it is anything to go by, is missing in our national polity. For, after elections, the people virtually fold their arms and watch while the politicians in government formulate policies and take decisions that do not reflect the needs, hopes and aspirations of the masses.

Remember “elections do not equal democracy”. It is high time we, as a nation, applied our psyche to the tenets of good governance and uphold public participation in setting our national development priorities. The current social and economic drift requires massive information flow to, and empowerment of, citizens as well as inclusive consultations.

The governance structures that we have adopted for our national polity are edifying but our attitudes towards utilizing them are, to say the least, appalling. One of the ways in which we can make the governance structures work is through public participation in setting development priorities, transparency and **functional**

accountability.

We have been paying lip service to transparency and accountability, which have been flogged enough, abused and bastardised. But one of the ways to check the abuse of these values is through public participation in governance, at both the local and national levels. However, for now, let's talk about local government.

Decentralisation and Community participation

Emerging democracies face major difficulties meeting public expectations, and as nations decentralize, citizens increasingly look to local governments for

to subject such plans to public hearings.

With regard to planning at the district level, one of the key elements in the decentralised development planning system is the participation of the local communities in planning and decisions that affect their livelihood. Accordingly, the district development planning process is expected to begin with the participation of the local communities in the identification of problems and determination of goals and objectives from the unit committee level through the town/area/zonal councils to the District Assemblies.

The district planning co-ordinating units then interpret and co-ordinate the district plans into medium-term development plans for consideration of the executive committee of the District Assemblies and debate by the assembly. The approved district development plan is then forwarded to the regional co-ordinating councils for co-ordination and harmonisation.

However, that is not what is happening on the ground. District Assemblies carry out their development planning without as much as involving their communities. They have put aside the rules and regulations for

more to marshal their communities' for strategic engagement.

In fact, the District Assemblies and the sub-district structures such as town/area councils and unit committees have not made meaningful impacts in transforming the livelihoods of local communities in the districts. Rural poverty is therefore an endemic problem in Ghana.

Way forward

Let us build the capacities of the Assembly persons to enable them galvanize their electorates into viable interest groups at the village level for active participation in decisions that affect their lives. Let our District Assemblies do more of community engagement.

Community engagement is an important principle in the planning and decision making process of local government. Quality consultation and engagement are essential foundations of good governance. With effective communication, dialogue and increased involvement, Assemblies will be better positioned to make informed decisions about issues that affect the local communities. Community involvement in the implementation of projects is a critical element of strengthening local communities and increasing the bonds between the Assemblies and community members.

Quality consultation and engagement are building blocks for good governance. Local governments that inform, consult and listen to their local communities, and communities which are engaged and participate in their governance, make for healthy democracies and involved citizens.

Public participation in governance requires a strong will from all concerned – from the side of the citizens whose trust in political institutions needs to be bolstered, and also on the side of government officials who need to be willing to bring greater equality to the power relations between themselves and citizens.

Elections do not equal democracy

solutions. Yet at the local level, the democratic process and its ability to meet constituent demands are often weak or inefficient.

Under the Local Government Act 462 of 1993, District Assemblies have executive, deliberative and technical support services to articulate the views and aspirations of the local communities for development at the district level. This function assists the District Assemblies not only to prepare district development plans but also

community participation in setting district development priorities and taken off at a conspicuously parallel tangent. Consequently, more often, their development priorities do not reflect community needs, hopes and aspirations.

Assembly Members

Most of the Assembly members who are supposed to articulate the development needs of their electorates do not understand their roles and responsibilities much

From Our
Upper East Correspondent

Mr. Edward Awuunure, the District Chief Executive (DCE) of Talensi, has expressed worry about the spate of teenage pregnancies among school children in the area.

In an interview at Tongo, the DCE said the situation was not only affecting the lives of the girls but also impeded their physical development.

He regretted that the problem gets worse during vacation periods when most of the school girls travelled to the southern parts of the country to do menial jobs to get money to buy few things only to return with pregnancies.

To help address the problem, the DCE impressed upon parents to play their roles very well by providing the needs of their children and also counseling them to know the significance of education.

He said, for instance, it took the intervention of the District Assembly and the police to bring back majority of the school girls who travelled to Accra and Kumasi during last year's vacation and reintegrate them into their families.

He cautioned parents that under the children's act it was obligatory on the part of the parents to adequately cater for the needs of their children and warned that henceforth parents who disregard the law by refusing to cater for their

children's education would not be spared.

The DCE stated that government had put in place numerous interventions including the capitation grant, the school feeding programme, the free school uniforms and books as means to help parents cater for their children's education and wondered why some parents often neglected their responsibilities.

He called on teachers to also redouble their efforts to ensure that the canker reduces drastically and said plans were far advanced by the District Assembly to motivate hardworking teachers. He entreated the students to keep away from pre-marital sex and to take their studies seriously.

"Your future starts

Talensi DCE Expresses Worry about Spate Of Teenage Pregnancies

from today and you must make your books your best friends to enable you become more responsible".

The phenomenon is not limited to the Talensi District alone. The Paramount Chief of Bongo Traditional Area, Naba Baba Salifu Alemyarum recently expressed the same sentiment when the newly appointed District Chief Executive for Bongo, Mr Alexis Ayamdor paid a

courtesy call on him to formally introduce himself to him.

The Paramount Chief told the DCE that the traditional council had been embarking on sensitization programmes to educate parents in communities. He stressed the need for the Assembly to also get actively involved in dealing with the issue.



Farmers on the path to climate change resilience

Contd. from page 4

Jobila, a total of 2,080 goats comprising local and foreign breeds (male/female) were given to all farmers in the 5 communities and when they multiply, it would enable them and their families to stay off the natural vegetation as a source of livelihood which often comes in the form of hunting, charcoal

production, tree felling and among others.

He explained that, droppings from the livestock would be used to boost an organic agriculture programme introduced as part of the project.

He also disclosed that, each of the 5 beneficiary communities received a

total of 140,000 tree plants comprising acacia, teak, lucinia, moringa, grafted mangoes, kapok and mahogany to establish 315 acres of forest plantations in their respective localities to improve upon the degrading vegetation and further provide them with woodlots for building and other forms of construction, fodder for their ruminants,

herbal medicine and food in future.

Mr. Jobila also said efforts were being made by ZEPF to rehabilitate major rivers and the basic school buildings in the Sayoo community for instance, through some afforestation programmes so that they could help protect buildings and other structures against rainstorms.

Sagnarigu District Seeks Municipality Status

Stories
Joseph Ziem, **SAGNARIGU**

The Sagnarigu District, one of 46 new districts created nationwide in 2012, has a huge geographical land size like the Tamale Metropolis.

The district, which was carved out of the Tamale Metropolis, has an estimated population of 150,000. It boasts of most of the huge capital investments made over the years and in recent times in infrastructure by government as well as private investors.

These investments are in various forms such as hotels, restaurants and bars, financial institutions, the Tamale Sports Stadium, Tamale campus of the University for Development Studies (UDS), UDS Graduate School, Tamale School of Hygiene and the Community Health and

Nursing Training School.

Others include the Tamale Polytechnic, Tamale College of Education (TATCO), Bagabaga College of Education (BATCO), Tamale Senior High School (TAMASCO), Tamale Islamic SHS, Business SHS (BISCO), Northern School of Business (NOBISCO), Tamale Airport and even the offices of the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly as well as the Tamale Metropolitan Directorate of the Ghana Education Service are all located in the Sagnarigu District.

With such well endowed institutions in addition to several others which have not been captured here, it is not surprising that, residents of Sagnarigu, especially the District Chief Executive Alhassan Mohammed Soru-Gudoo, are calling on the



Tamale Sport Stadium in Sagnarigu District

government to consider elevating the district to the status of a municipality since it has already started rendering services expected of a municipality.

Mr. Soru-Gudoo is also of the view that the elevation of Sagnarigu District Assembly would promote infrastructural and socio-economic development

in the area. He has encouraged the members of the Assembly including the two members of parliament (MPs for Sagnarigu and Tamale North Constituencies) to further push for the district to be elevated.

Soru-Gudoo's Development Aspirations For Sagnarigu

As the DCE of Sagnarigu, Alhassan Mohammed Soru-Gudoo's development aspiration for Sagnarigu District is instructive. Speaking about the district's development blue-print he said some projects have been earmarked already for execution by the Assembly in the next few years.

Prominent among these projects are the construction of a new Senior High School on a 22 acre plot of land at Malshagu, asphaltting of roads in some selected communities and extension of electricity to deprived areas in the district.

According to Mr. Soru-Gudoo, the Assembly was also putting up a 20-seater aqua private toilet facility and fence wall at Katariga, Number one 10-seater aqua private toilet at Kalpohini, construction of Number one 10-unit market

stalls at Sagnarigu under the District Development Fund and rehabilitation of a 6-unit classroom block at Gumani.

He said, notwithstanding some modest achievements made by the Assembly since its inception in 2012, the number and quality of roads, drainage systems, electricity, health facilities, education, water and sanitation, leaves much to be desired.

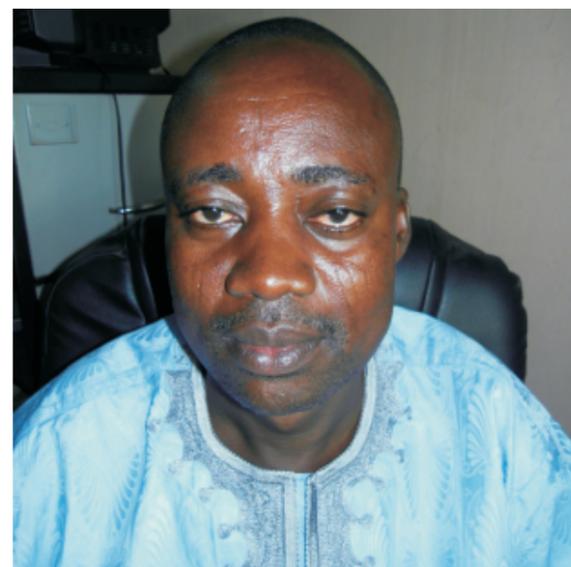
In line with government's industrial policy and objective to provide potable water, the Assembly, he said, had embarked on major pipe-borne water extension works to over 10 communities with a funding facility of 1.5 million Ghana cedis from the Export Development and Agriculture Investment Fund.

Mr. Soru-Gudoo also disclosed that, the Sagnarigu District Assembly again was in collaboration with the Ghana Water Company Limited to extend pipe-borne water to another set of 10 communities including Kulai, Balaye, Grumaa, Wovo and Gumani among others.

"Under the Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Programme, five KVIPs are being constructed in some schools including the Tamale Islamic Senior High School, Tamale Senior High School, St. Augustine Basic School, Our Lady of Fatima at Nyanshegu and the Methodist Middle School at Ward K", he stated.

Furthermore, the Sagnarigu DCE noted that the Assembly had also considered the construction of a 1.5 kilometre storm drain and

retention pond at Gumani and the construction of a new abattoir at Sheshagu under the Ghana Urban Management Project.



Alhassan Mohammed Soru-Gudoo, Chief Executive, Sagnarigu District Assembly



Nurudeen Salifu

PUBLICInterest

Where did SADA go wrong?

By Nurudeen Salifu

AS I wrote this piece my heart was bleeding. Angry voices blurred from my little radio set. I could hear a gentleman from a civil society group in Tamale swearing fire and brimstone should President John Mahama not axe Dr Charles Jebuni, who has been asked to act as Chief Executive Officer for the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) following the exit of Alhaji Gilbert Iddi.

In 2010, the enthusiasm was at a crescendo as the SADA Law (Act 805, 2010) was passed and subsequently inaugurated to begin work. There had been so much rhetoric about the need for the establishment of a body to spearhead an agenda to quicken the pace of development in the north.

So the goose to lay the golden eggs was finally hatched and it became a popular refrain, particularly from politicians, that SADA would offer a quick fix to the problems of the north, such as unemployment, poor road networks, ailing agriculture, environmental degradation, high illiteracy, name them.

So what went wrong? What has happened to all the expectations and promises? How could a beautiful initiative suddenly go bad?

In the last two years, SADA has received so much bad publicity and its reputation has been seriously compromised. Complaints about failed projects, incompetent leadership and

questionable contractual agreements have continued to mar the image of a unique institution that has failed to win the confidence of the people it is mandated to serve.

We do not need to dig deep to find these answers and I hope another consultant would not be paid to diagnose and prescribe solutions to SADA's self-inflicted paralyses.

As a journalist who has followed closely SADA from preconception to take-off, my little post-mortem reveals that SADA failed due to the following reasons.

The rule of the few

I call it the rule of the few because SADA's ideas were basically sourced and credited to a few 'scholars' close to the President and they made sure they suffocated him with their 'best' ideas and did not allow for adequate pool of ideas and consultation.

At many of their consultation forums, all they did was to tell the participants what they 'the experts'



Dr. Charles Jebuni,
Acting CEO, SADA



Alhaji Gilbert Seidu Iddi,
Former CEO, SADA

intended to do to save the rest of those in the north and then seek their approval in an atmosphere that did not allow for more ideas to be brought on board.

Failed Projects

Why would the reforestation project not fail? I agree that desertification is approaching the northern savannah due to activities such as increased logging, bush burning, land degradation, mining activities, among others.

But come to think of it, was the solution simply to plant trees. Did SADA not know about the numerous failed reforestation projects and what lessons did they draw from it.

How were the communities involved in this project? Did they own the plantlets and were they committed to supervising these plants to grow. Were the chiefs or assembly men playing any lead roles? What about the development needs of the people? Did they say tree planting was their priority at that moment and how well do they appreciate the value of trees.

How about the much-maligned guinea fowl project? How much efforts was put into bringing guinea fowl farmers (real ones, I mean) to sit and discuss this project, provide their inputs and participate actively from the conception to take-off.

Were guinea fowl farmers eager about the project? You see, when people do not feel any attachment, hope or sense of ownership to a project supposedly targeting them, the project is already doomed.

The successes of any project are reflected in the demeanour and wellbeing of

Contd. on page 7

EveryWOMAN

Women's Health is a Community Issue

When a woman is healthy, she has the energy and strength to do her daily work, to fulfill the many roles she has in her family and community, and to build satisfying relationships with others. In other words, a woman's health affects every area of her life.

Yet for many years, 'women's health care' has meant little more than maternal health services such as care during pregnancy and birth. These services are necessary, but they only address women's needs as mothers. Except for the ability to produce babies, a woman's health needs have been treated as no different from a man's.

This piece offers a different view of women's health. First, every woman has a right to complete health care, throughout her life. A woman's health care should help her in all areas of life—not just in her role as a wife and mother. Second, we believe that a woman's health is affected not just by the way her body is made, but by the social, cultural, and economic conditions in which she lives.

While men's health is also affected by these factors, women as a group are treated differently from men. They usually have less power and fewer resources, and lower status in the family and community. This basic inequality means that:

- More women than men suffer from poverty.
- More women than men are denied the education and skills to support themselves.
- More women than men lack access to important health information and services.
- More women than men lack control over their basic health care decisions.

This larger view helps us understand the underlying (root) causes of women's poor health. Improving women's health includes treating their health problems, but it also requires changing the conditions of their lives so they can gain more power over their own health.

When this happens, everyone - the woman, her family and community



Every minute, one woman dies from a problem related to pregnancy

benefits. A healthy woman has a chance to fulfill all of her potential. Plus, she will have healthier babies, be better able to care for her family, and can contribute more to her community.

This kind of view also helps us see that a woman's health problem is almost never her problem alone. Women's health is a community issue.

Where did SADA go wrong?

Contd. from page 5

the beneficiaries and they are the best persons to spread the good news. So are there any people sharing the good news of SADA's projects. Who are they and how many.

Poor communication

What even amazed me was the poor communication from SADA. When the agitations gained momentum and Alhaji Gilbert Iddi, the then CEO, began to feel the heat, he made strenuous efforts to rescue his image, but it was a total disaster.

Alhaji Iddi was simply helpless as people kept asking "where are the guinea fowls?" He could not explain effectively the partnership with Asongtaba, how it came about, why the huge costs and what the prospects were for such an investment. He was simply drowned as he tried catching at a straw.

Desperate to save his reputation, he resorted to carrying journalists from place to place showing them supposed successful projects (some of which were not initiatives of SADA, such as the butternut and guinea fowl project).

At a point I was wondering whether SADA had no communication officer to coordinate its communication and why Alhaji Iddi was trying to be everywhere in the media explaining and confusing Ghanaians the more.

I was informed that an experienced journalist had been appointed the communication manager, but that he was based in Accra and rarely visited the project areas.

It is important to state that communication is not only useful during crisis, it is crucial from planning stage, take-off to end of project. It is also not limited to media engagement. Such projects require a lot of participatory development communication activities to deepen understanding, stimulate a sense of ownership and participation and ensure sustainability.

Waste of resources

It appears to me that a lot of funds given to SADA have been committed to non-intervention

expenditure of SADA from the beginning. Mr President, what were the parameters you gave Alhaji Iddi in terms of spending.

A different approach could have helped

So what could have been done better? I am not an economist or development practitioner, but a Ghanaian with a viewpoint, however nonsensical it may sound.

I think SADA could have started on a better note by pooling ideas across board, building consensus, stimulating a sense of ownership and letting the people feel they are directing the focus of

various stakeholders agree on how SADA should progress and to keep reviewing SADA's operations periodically. Let us remember always that SADA is not a private company to be left in the hands of the board and management alone.

Such a platform would have had various governmental institutions and private enterprises who would discuss a number of programmes they are pursuing or intend to implement which could lead to the transformation of the north.

SADA's role would be to help in prioritising these programmes and explore funding avenues to execute these programmes. For instance, SADA cannot build roads, but SADA can work with the roads ministry to prioritise key road networks in the north and secure funding to execute these road projects.

Such dialoguing promotes transparency and ensures that everyone gets on board.

I am not privy to what the President is doing to revitalize SADA, but I hope it is really for the best. I would keep watching and hoping for the best, although with teary eyes. It is not too late to redirect this development vehicle.

I call it the rule of the few because SADA's ideas were basically sourced and credited to a few 'scholars' close to the President and they made sure they suffocated him with their 'best' ideas and did not allow for adequate pool of ideas and consultation.

expenditure and not on the supposed development interventions. These include paying of consultants and office personnel (some of whom are virtually not working), buying cars, furnishing office space, paying allowances for travels and so on.

I think a lot of prudence should have been exercised in the

SADA.

For instance, SADA could have organised open forums in the regions to seek the views of the people on what are their priorities and to indicate the problems they think need attention first.

It would have been appropriate too for SADA to have instituted a dialogue platform where

SADA Must Not Fail - RUMNET

Contd. from page 4

SADA could also provide information and education, or initiate communication activities, that help micro-entrepreneurs to re-align their enterprises and prioritize them in ways that enable them to move away from investing overly in social ventures, to embracing economic investments.

There must be a two-way

communication channel between SADA and its stakeholders. It must ensure constant flow of information to its stakeholders and to elicit information from them, which could be used to determine the subsequent direction and levels of services provided by SADA.

Finally, the SADA strategy also entails active support for Civil Society

Organizations and NGOs. These are stakeholders that have long sustained livelihoods and provided a base for mobilizing citizens to engage actively in development throughout the three regions and adjoining districts. Their stake in SADA cannot be underestimated. They can provide backup services for SADA through monitoring

and advocacy.

SADA must not fail. As Mr. Alhassan Andani, Chairman of the SADA Board once said: "What will make SADA a success is the ownership the people of the area will feel towards it. It is about their development and they should not allow the SADA process to be bastardized through narrow, parochial party partisan lines. They should own it."

Every stakeholder in the northern savannah belt must be concerned about the success of SADA and must not go to sleep. Posterity will never forgive them if SADA fails. *Aboy! Choboyee!*

Ronaldo: My history and goals can't be erased

Ronaldo Luis Nazario de Lima hardly requires an introduction. Better known as 'O Fenómeno' (the phenomenon), or simply Ronaldo, he is one of the greatest strikers the world has ever seen. The FIFA World Cup's all-time leading scorer with 15 goals, the former Cruzeiro, PSV Eindhoven, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Real Madrid, AC Milan and Corinthians player is celebrating a special anniversary this year. Two decades ago, on 25 May 1993, he took the first step of his storied, tremendously successful career.

A far cry from the 16 year-old kid who found himself playing among the experienced professionals of Cruzeiro against Caldense in the Minas Gerais state championship in 1993, Ronaldo took time out of a recent trip to Zurich to recall his beginnings in an interview with FIFA.com. He talked about the nerves he felt that day, how he felt when he got his first wage packet, his experiences of playing for a number of fierce rivals, and the World Cup party coming to Brazil in 2014.

FIFA.com: Ronaldo, this year marks the 20th anniversary of your debut as a professional. What can you remember about that day?

Ronaldo: It was a long time ago! I remember everything about my career like it was yesterday, right from the beginning. I remember how it felt to come through the ranks and turn professional at Cruzeiro. I'd always dreamed about being a footballer and it was such an exciting feeling when I realised it was happening. It was magical. My legs, arms and even my hands were shaking. But once the game started I managed to calm down.

Your life is very different now. Do you remember what you did with your first wage packet?

I remember. I gave it all to my mother because back in Bento Ribeiro my brothers



Ronaldo celebrates victory

and my parents had beds, but I slept on the sofa. My mum had the sofa reupholstered as a thank you present, so I would have a better place to sleep.

Looking back, would you have done anything differently?

No. Thanks to the discipline I had, the sacrifices I made and my dedication to football, everything has worked out the way I wanted. In fact, it's been even better than I could have imagined. I never thought I'd go so far. I'd always dreamed about being a footballer. So my sporting life was perfect.

Which strikers did you admire in those days?

Zico has always been my idol. As for strikers, well in those days it was (Marco) van Basten. One of the greatest centre forwards.

Was there a specific team you would have liked to have played for?

Not one team in particular. I definitely would have liked to try my hand at English football, but it wasn't to be.

You were a huge star at Barcelona, but you also played for Real Madrid. And you also had spells at both Inter and AC Milan. Millions of fans love you, but maybe there were some who weren't quite so keen...

As a great Brazilian writer (Nelson Rodrigues) once said, any unanimity is stupid. I don't worry about not pleasing a few people. As long as I made most of them happy... (laughs)

A year after your first game as a professional you won the FIFA World Cup in the USA without even stepping foot on the pitch. What was it like spending time with players like Romario, Dunga and Bebeto?

Spending time with Romario, Bebeto, Dunga, Rai, Leonardo, players I'd seen on TV and that I admired so much, was amazing, like going back to school! All of a sudden I was there with them, playing and learning. I remember training, and watching how Romario and

Bebeto moved. It was a great learning process.

Brazil 2014 is getting closer. How do you think the national team is shaping up? The Confederations Cup isn't the same as the World Cup, after all...

It's not the same, but the team showed its potential at the Confederations Cup. With time to train, Brazil improved a great deal. It really gave Brazilians hope that we might win the World Cup at home. We've got a great chance.

Who are the favourites for the World Cup?

Spain and Germany are candidates, but Brazil have shown how strong they are, and we'll be playing at home. I'd say that the favourites are Brazil, Germany and Spain, in that order.

Did you know that Miroslav Klose is just one goal away from equalling your record as the World Cup's top goal scorer?

Yes, lots of people have mentioned it. I believe that records are there to be broken. It doesn't worry me. Someone is bound to break the record one day. I made my name scoring lots of goals, and that will never be forgotten. My personal history and my 15 World Cup goals will never be erased. If he scores more than me, I'll congratulate him, and of course I admire him. But he'll never take away my goals or my history.

If that happens, it would be a revenge for the Germans, after you broke Gerd Muller's record in Germany...

Maybe. The record could go back to Germany. But it's a record that brings personal satisfaction, not victory for the team. It helps the team too, of course, but it's more important to win things together.

Lastly, thinking about everything that's happened over the last 20 years, what advice would you give to the Ronaldo of 1993?

I'd tell him to be patient, ambitious, and disciplined. I haven't changed that much as a person over the years. I'd do everything exactly the same way. *FIFA.com*

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