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How digital learning can prepare Africa's youth workforce for the jobs of tomorrow



Students of Tanyigbe EP Kpodzi JHS immersing themselves in the virtual reality experience by studying deeply the human body.

Africa's educational ecosystem has various key stakeholders and as such needs a strong collaborative approach to address the challenges that has bedeviled it over the years. It doesn't take rocket science to realize the massive challenge youth unemployment poses to African nations.

With an education system that is inflexible to the demands of the job market, youth and graduate unemployment becomes inevitable. Africa's education sector has faced huge challenges in adapting to the changes of the modern world.

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Galamsey and its problems.



"I was twelve when it happened. Before we could retrieve him from the bowels of the earth it was too late. When I saw the remains of my father after we had managed to pull

mine shaft, no words could describe the intense pain that I felt. His entire body was covered with mud and had already started to decay".

As I listened intently to my friend while he narrated this painful story about how he had lost his father as a result of illegal mining, As I listened intently to my friend while he narrated this painful story about how he had lost his father as a result of illegal mining, I could not help but wonder how many times stories such as this had been told by families who had lost their loved ones as a result of the menace of illegal mining.

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As data is the new oil fuelling this age, the internet is this fuel's container. The call for making the internet a human right is much in place than ever before. Statistics have shown that digital innovation is proportional to open, affordable and accessible

internet connectivity.

It is to this end that the UN declared that "online freedom" is a "human right," and one that must be protected. This was adopted in the UN Resolution A/HRC/32/L.20, although some countries rejected this resolution later in July 2016.

Think Mobile, Act Local.

With over 620 million of Africans lacking access to power, online learning still has a long way to go in order to achieve its full potential. However, mobile phone penetration has been increasingly high than ever before. This calls for mobile learning solutions like "A day in Virtual Reality (VR)", a junior high school project that immersed 84 students in a rural community (Tanyigbe, Volta Region) into the human digestive, respiratory and gastro-intestinal system of the human body. Of this number, 50 young girls had fun, interactive and engaging time stimulating their interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses and preparing them better enough for their final exams.

Since the digital revolution is transforming learning and the world of work, there is the need for a paradigm shift towards white-labelled workforce training programs delivered using mobile platforms. This will be an effective skill retooling for the industry. Online learning should be integrated with offline realities. For example, a course one takes online should have a direct bearing on his output at work.

Impact Sourcing Opportunities.

This is an intentional effort of creating direct job opportunities of the digital ecosystem to youth and young graduates who may be overlooked in these aspect and areas. Certain jobs and contracts should only be awarded to only certain age groups and demographics since this is a sound business practice that promotes diversity, inclusion and social impact. We must ensure regulatory practices that enforce outsourcing of digital jobs from business process outsourcing to social media; targeting deserving youth groups.

By: Cherubim Mawuli Amenyedor.
(YDG Delegate)

Editorial

In a culture where the older generation are so venerated, the youth are easily relegated to the shadows as followers rather than leaders. For so long, this is what we have witnessed in our part of the world.

There are few opportunities for the youth to voice their opinions and ideas let alone take up influential positions where they can be at the helm of affairs of the country. However things are quickly changing.

A quick glance at the international scene proves this. The recently elected Emmanuel Macron of France, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai have shown us age poses no limit in leadership and in making a difference in society. Our very own Farida Bedwei proves neither age nor disability should ever impede anyone from reaching their full potential.

It is with this in mind the Young Diplomats of Ghana network was established. A unique platform that seeks to advance the development of a new generation of aspiring leaders and diplomats in Ghana and to build their advocacy experience. This journal is just one of the ways we seek to accomplish this. It is meant to give the youth a voice; to showcase their potential and to inspire the younger generation to action!

The YDG Journal is a call to live out the old song most of us sang in our school days:

"Arise Ghana Youth for your country
The nation demands your devotion
Let us all unite to uphold her
And make her great and strong.
We are involved in building our motherland"

To the Ghanaian youth, I say Arise! Arise, let us find our voices and be the difference we wish to see. Our Motherland needs us.

To our leaders and the older generation, we ask that you support us in every way you can. Help us build on the foundations that you have laid.

Together, let us build a Ghana we will be proud to leave for posterity!

By: Ivana Obeng-Odei.

Ghana's human litter

In his book 'the end of poverty', Jeffery Sachs outlined the most pressing state of poverty and how to end it in all areas of this earth in our time by the year 2025. I strongly believed this was possible, however, the state of my nation Ghana and other African countries has got me thinking that 2025 may have been a bit ambitious, knowing we are already knocking on the doors of 2020.

To sleep in a house without a burglar proof in my residential area is enough cause for alarm and a constant disruption of sleep due to the fear caused by the inadequate guarantee of safety but that is nothing compared to the vulnerable state of sleeping on the streets. Bypassing a couple of people by the roadside late one night, I was struck by the scene of a very tired and sleepy mother, sitting on the ground beneath a traffic light dozing and at the same time, trying to clear off mosquitoes from her two children lying by her on the ground, in the open air at night.

I wondered, 'how do they sleep like that? Without protection, roof, or proper sleeping clothing to shield them from the cold, rain, thieves, accidents, or any fatality or abuse?'. I wondered, how it could be that while I go to sleep soundly in my room, a whole family is on the street, possibly hungry and needing a good bath or even clean water to drink? Then I realized the inhumanity of the human race, that we have done a great injustice to those who are vulnerable. One may say, 'they are able bodies, so why don't they work to make a good living for themselves?'

But why would a mother succumb herself and her children to this kind of life? Why would a strong man, who works extremely hard by selling in the busy streets, seeing the cars that pass by and the nice houses around him, not want to have a comfortable and safe life for himself?

Why would a father with all the ego of a man, push his child to beg in the busy streets at the risk of losing his child to an accident? It was then I realized what we have done to ourselves as human beings, what we have ignited due to our lack of concern and empathy, and how we have become our

own fears, neglecting those who need us the most on the basis that we work harder than them. But what is the use anyway if we live comfortably and others struggle? What is the use if we call ourselves educated, that we know our human rights, but cannot fight for the same rights for others who do not even know they have rights? That they qualify just as any other to be at least on level one of Maslow's hierarchy of needs?



Again I thought of what could be done because there is no use asking these questions if nothing is going to be done about it. A few ideas came to mind. In short term, public shelters with full year education and empowerment programs? Social interventions from governments, private sector, individuals? And how do we take them off these streets permanently?

Relating this to the unacceptable amount of waste and its effects in Ghana (one of the major issues of concern :solid waste and e-waste), there seems to be an understatement of the effects of 'Human Litter' on the streets and the intellectual, emotional, physical and relevant capability waste that is on the streets. Child protection experts have estimated that the number of street children in the Greater Accra Region alone hovers around 90,000. This has not even taken into account, the youth and grownups who are 'littered' on the streets through street hawking and street living. It is clear that littering has very bad effects on the economy and its outlook. However, Ghana can rightly reduce these numbers and eventually clear it to zero if action is taken fast.

The action of well-equipped public shelter system that has at least a year program to fully empower the inhabitants to move out on their own, public systems that provide quality food, good beds, clean washrooms, schools, working healthcare systems, good transport system among others that will facilitate our development. I do not have all the answers to this so I also throw the question, because it seems our developmental accidents causing retarded growth in Africa, could be due to the amount of human litter around us, which we are failing to clean up. Again I ask you too, what do you think we can do about this?

By: Joana Poma Chemel.
(YDG Delegate)

Ghana can be like Singapore

In 1957, both Ghana and Malaysia gained independence from Great Britain. Singapore was an integral part of Malaysia until August 9, 1965 when it was ejected by the Malays and forced to accept the challenge of forming a viable nation.

They took up the challenge and today, Singapore which was at par with Ghana some decades ago now looks centuries apart. Singapore is believed to be the only country to have moved from a third world to a first world country in just about a decade.

It is currently well advanced and among the top four economies in the world and have a very effective educational system. Ghana is however striving to stand on its own.

We are still striving to be economically independent regardless the many natural resource endowment.

The question to ask now is, what can Ghana learn from Singapore? What did they do right? I think the differentiator is Leadership and their Educational System.

Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew who ruled from 1956 to 1990, Singapore made great strides; as he contributed greatly in transforming the country into a first world. His leadership style was that of pragmatism; a focus on whatever is most effective in getting to results; devoid of ideology and discipline.

His government learnt from advanced countries and adopted mechanisms that were effective. He never got stuck with an idea if he realized it was unproductive. He developed his human capital by sending some of his citizens abroad to study engineering and brought them back to develop the country.

He made precisions about the ratio of engineers to be trained to technicians to be trained. He took practical steps to ensure that his human resources were at par with industrialization.

He built his leadership based on trust and integrity. It is explicitly recognized that people follow leaders into the unknown only when there is a foundation of trust and that



trust is born out of personal incorruptibility and moral authority on the part of leaders. This personal integrity saw almost all his citizens behind him in making such great strides. After Dr. Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, there was a series of military coups making Ghana politically unstable. Further, most of the country's leaders have played the ideology card; refusing to meet the challenges of the country head on as it happened in Lee Kuan Yew's Singapore.

Amidst plentiful natural resources, the leadership has failed to develop the human resource to be at par with the resources to ensure development. There is no trust between the leadership and followers since people always speculate about political leaders being corrupt. I think the leadership of the country may want to consider pragmatism and meeting the problems of the country head on.

Singapore has made about three major restructuring of the educational system handed them by their colonial masters. They have a customized system that allows every child receive education based on his capabilities. Students who are not very academic have another vocational option.

Singapore's educational system is among the top three in the World. This shows the quality of human resource available in this country. This has also contributed to the level of their success.

In Ghana, it looks like very little changes have been made to the educational system handed to us by colonial masters. I always feel sad to see people frustrated about education in Ghana just because they failed Mathematics or some other

subjects. I know these are very important subjects to learn, but there must be other options for those who are not very academic as it is in Singapore.

Singapore is not a paradise, it is not a perfect place, they have their own problems, but with their level of success, I think it would be wise for Ghana to adopt the pragmatic style of leadership that saw them there. The educational system also needs to be updated to meet head on with the challenges of Ghana.

By: Emmanuel Asare.
(YDG Delegate)

Galamsey and its problems

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Illegal mining can be defined as any mining activity which is undertaken without the permission of the state. It is popularly referred to as "Galamsey" in Ghana and the illegal miners who engage in this practice are locally referred to as "Galamseyers". These "Galamseyers" mainly engage in illegal mining because they are poor and they need the money to survive.

Most of these illegal miners are foreigners who travel from neighboring West African countries such as Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Ivory Coast or from other continents such as Asia, the Americas and Europe particularly China and Russia into the country.

According to the 2016 final report of the International Growth Center, the process of Galamsey normally includes the dredging of water bodies for gold or the digging of underground mines to extract ore which is then mixed with water and mercury to attract the gold particle from the ore. It is no secret that these practices adopted by illegal miners are destroying not only the quality of the natural resources from which they extract their gold and other precious minerals but also the lives of innocent citizens who depend on these natural resources. Water bodies are the central natural resource that are constantly being polluted and destroyed by the activities of illegal mining. In recent times, many research papers and news articles have reported on how illegal mining is destroying the main water bodies in the country.

One of such is a research report entitled "Assessing the social and environmental impacts of illegal mining operations in River Bonsa", which describes in vivid and frightening detail how the quantity of water produced by the production plant in the Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipal Area, where the River Bonsa is located, has drastically reduced as a result of the effects of illegal mining.

The research report goes on to disclose how the people living within that area are suffering from various diseases and economic hardship because of the activities of illegal miners, who only care for their profit and not the general well-being of all.

"Galamsey" does not only destroy the natural resources of this country but it also causes a ripple effect which affects the food production of this country. According to the 2016 Journal of Food Security, "By degrading arable lands, contaminating water bodies, polluting the air, shifting labour from food crop farming to mining and displacing farmers, galamsey by surface mining is largely responsible for the low food production,

food price spikes and the high cost of living, especially in galamsey-prone regions of Ghana." Even though "Galamsey" appears to be a lucrative venture, it kills many people every year and by so doing, it robs the nation of potent manpower that could have been useful in contributing to the development and growth of our dear nation. I strongly recommend that in addition to passing stringent laws to deter anyone from engaging in this act, the government should also do well to diversify their investments in the economy to help create a multitude of job avenues to serve as an alternative to Galamsey. This would not only save our country, but could also help save Africa and the rest of the world.

By: David Sasu.
(YDG Delegate)

A World of Hate

Since the beginning of the year, there has been a lot of focus on racism and political-correctness when it comes to race and color. Hate has been spewing out of the mouths and actions of so many people of different colors and background, in sports, technology, the arts industry and some very unlikely places.

In April 2017, a thirteen-year-old girl was among three people found guilty of a race-hate attack on two Muslim women in London. Two elderly male and female, along with this child beat up a mother and daughter in Eltham for no other reason than the color of their skin and the god they worship.



Just recently, Ghana's very own Sulley Muntari was attacked with racist chants at a football game in Italy where he plays for the Italian football club, Pescara. He had to leave the pitch after fruitlessly trying to explain to the rowdy crowd that it is the color of his skin and that there is nothing he can do to change it. He almost got penalized for his actions on the field that day until the Italian Football Federation changed its mind on account of how racist the crowd was. A similar incident happened in the United Kingdom where a 17 year old woman verbally abused a Celtic player with racial slurs on social media.

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In technology, software companies like FaceApp have had to take down certain features of their apps, Nivea have had to withdraw certain advertisements, and so on, because of racism and racist perception of their content. Politicians have been attacked because of the color of their skin. Poets, actors, writers and many ordinary people get attacked and abused, physically and verbally, everyday around the world and it seems to be only getting worse.

Just walking down the street has become quite dangerous in many countries in Europe and the Americas because of the color of one's skin. Racial profiling has given birth to the #BlackLivesMatter campaign in the United States, where statistics show that a black person runs a higher risk of being stopped by the police on suspicion of a crime than a white person based on no other "evidence" than the color of their skin.

Police brutality, officer-involved shooting all directed at people of color has raised a lot of eyebrows and created a lot of movements in Europe and the Americas to fight this racial terrorism and bring some peace to the world.

When organizations like the KKK or variations of it are allowed to exist, it is not surprising that the world is full of hate. Nowadays, people would rather fight than argue. It has become offensive to hear another person's opinion or views on things. We have aligned ourselves with various groups spewing hate under the guise of fighting for what is right.

We have assigned certain tags to ourselves which we let define us more than our humanity and conscience should. Even in Ghana and Africa, in general, which is full of black people, we have managed to separate ourselves by tribe and ethnicity, constantly competing with each other for political power and cultural superiority. This has resulted in prebendalism, leading our democracies nowhere.

When did our intelligence and our capabilities come to depend on the color of our skins or the tribes we come from? The world faces real problems like climate change, over population, lack of quality education and many others. As we struggle to solve those problems, we keep on creating new ones for ourselves.

The younger generations have to be taught to see past the color of one's skin. For, if we do not work together, we will lose this planet we call Earth to real problems.

By: Francis Asante.
(YDG Delegate)

Behind closed doors: The legality of homosexuality in Ghanaian jurisprudence.



There has been a wave of legalization of homosexuality in countries such as the United States of America. A lot of Ghanaians have wondered exactly what the Ghanaian law is on homosexuality.

This article would discuss as concise as possible the following:

1. Definition of homosexuality.
2. The law on homosexuality on Ghana.
3. Interpretation of the law
4. Conclusion
5. Authors comments

Definition of homosexuality

Homosexuality is an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions primarily or exclusively to people of the same sex.

The law on homosexuality in Ghana

Section 104 of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003 (Act 646) provides:

(1) Whoever has unnatural carnal knowledge
(a) of any person of the age of sixteen years or over without his consent shall be guilty of a first degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years; or

(b) Of any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanor; or Of any animal is guilty of a misdemeanor.

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(2) Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal.

Section 104 of Act 646 is to the effect that it is a crime to have unnatural carnal knowledge of a person sixteen years or older with or without his consent. What exactly is meant by "unnatural carnal knowledge" is uncertain. There is no express statutory definition, neither has case law provided an answer.

Interpretation of the law: The meaning of unnatural carnal knowledge could however be deduced from section 99 of Act 29. Section 99 of Act 646 provides that: Whenever, upon the trial of any person for an offence punishable under this Code, it is necessary to prove carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge, the carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration. The later provision is also to the effect that unnatural carnal knowledge as a crime is established with the least degree of penetration.

If section 99 of Act 29 is to the effect that unnatural carnal knowledge is established with the least degree of penetration it could be safely concluded that unnatural carnal knowledge per section 104 of Act 29 is anal sex only. Sexual escapades of homosexuals include but are not limited to anal sex. Their sexual acts include kissing, masturbation or mutual masturbation, oral sex, rimming, which is the licking of another's anus and anal sex.

Having established the fact that section 104 and 99 of Act 29 criminalizes anal sex in Ghana, does it mean that homosexuality is legal in Ghana as long as homosexuals do not engage in anal sex? Does it mean that lesbianism is totally legal in Ghana? In Ghana, a person cannot be convicted of a crime unless the crime is stated in a statute and the punishment thereof expressly stated. This is reiterated per Article 19(11) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana which provides that:

"No person shall be convicted of a criminal offence unless the offence is defined and the penalty for it is prescribed in a written law".

From Article 19(11) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, it can be safely inferred that since the law does not expressly prohibit lesbianism it is therefore not a crime. In the same vein, homosexuality among men is not against the law so long as their sexual exploits do not include anal sex.

Authors Comments

However, it should be noted that having sexual intercourse from anyone below sixteen is a crime. Again forcibly having any sexual interaction whatsoever is also a crime

By: Akua Serwaa Ampong.
(YDG Delegate)

Dealing with suicide in Ghana - OPINION PIECE



Suicide is a topic that evokes a lot of emotion for various reasons. It is defined as death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour with the intent to die as a result of the behaviour. Suicide attempt on the other hand, is a nonfatal self-directed potentially injurious behaviour with the intent to die as a result of the behaviour. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.

Historically, almost all societies condemn suicide and often meted out punishments to the survivors of the suicide attempt in a bid to discourage the act. In Ghana, attempted suicide is a crime. The Ghanaian penal code, drafted in 1960 states in Act 29, section 57, subsection 2, that "whoever attempts to commit suicide shall be guilty of a misdemeanor." This law has remained un-amended for the last fifty-plus years since its inception.

Internationally, many countries in Europe and North America have decriminalized suicide; some of them, as early as the eighteenth century, with Germany being the first to do so in 1751. England decriminalized suicide in 1961 and although Ghana as a former colony inherited most of her laws from England, our law on attempted suicide remains unchanged. However, since it is now recognized that suicide mainly is as a result of depression, which is a treatable mental health condition, it is the opinion of the medical community that laws criminalizing suicide be changed.

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The first quarter of 2017 saw many cases of suicide making the national headlines and during that period, the Ghana Mental Health Authority called for the decriminalization of suicide in the country. This will help reduce the stigma surrounding suicide, as those who attempt it will be regarded as victims who need help, rather than as perpetrators of a crime who deserve punishment. People with suicidal thoughts would therefore not be afraid to seek help and this would subsequently result in a decrease in the incidence.

Decriminalization alone however is not enough. There will be the need for a well-resourced, comprehensive, national mental health programme to tackle various mental illnesses, including depression. Parliament would need to pass the legislative instrument to the Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846) to enable the Mental Health Authority institute its programmes. Both the private and public sectors have to come together to help in raising the awareness and reducing the stigma attached to mental illness.

Counseling, rehabilitation and support services for people suffering from depression will have to be increased nationwide, especially in high-stress facilities such as schools and universities, and also for workers in high-stress occupations such as doctors.

These centres should include a team of specialized health care professionals like psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and psychiatric nurses. National suicide hotlines should also be set up to enable suicidal individuals seek help.

In conclusion, the solution to reducing the incidence of suicide in Ghana is multi-faceted. Decriminalization of suicide and the establishment of a well-funded, comprehensive mental health programme to treat depression and other mental illnesses will play a role in achieving this.

By: Dr. Janice Lovi.
(YDG Delegate)

Empowering women and girls through science and mathematics in Ghana

Miss April Azumah (not her real name) grew up in Upper East, the second poorest region in Ghana. Determined to be a physician someday, she worked very hard and excelled in science and mathematics, which eventually won her a ticket to participate in Ghana Education Service (GES)'s Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) initiative organised to boost the interest of girls in science and mathematics at the basic school level.

Unfortunately, Miss Azumah watched this dream wane away because of inadequate guidance for selecting an appropriate STEM programme for her a Senior High School (SHS) education. Like April, many other young girls in Ghana will never realize their dreams of landing a career in STEM due to multiple factors, which is why the Government of Ghana along with other stakeholders must reverse the trend to empower girls and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.

The global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 charges member states to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This includes enhancing the use of enabling technologies, in particular information and communication technology (ICT), to promote women's empowerment.

Science, technology and innovation are key players of national development due to their immense contributions to poverty reduction, food security, improved energy sources, education, and disease prevention among a host

of others. For Africa to catch up with its developed colleagues, it is estimated that at least 2,000 scientists per 1 million population is required for effective industrial development. Sadly, most developing countries, including Ghana, lack affordable access to ICTs and are woefully under represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries and university courses.



Roundtable to mark the 2017 International day of Women and Girls in Science in Ghana.

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According to recent statistics, the probability of female students graduating with a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Doctor's degree in science-related field are 18%, 8% and 2% respectively, while the percentages of male students are 37%, 18% and 6%.

Female representation in Pure and Applied Science Courses in Ghanaian universities ranges from 1% to 22% in some Departments. Many factors account for this dwindling statistics, some of which include poverty and inequality, stereotyping and other socio-economic limitations. Unequivocally, girls and women from rural backgrounds are the hardest hit and are denied fair access to STEM courses and careers.

The United Nations General Assembly in 2016 declared 11th February an International Day of Women and Girls in Science as part of efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women by promoting equal access and participation in science for women and girls.

In this year's celebration, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, urged countries to end bias, and invest greatly in STEM education for all women and girls as well as create opportunities for their careers and longer-term professional advancement.

Ghana's Ministry of Education (MoE) must be applauded for rolling out its "Girls in Science Program" and mentorship program for girls at the basic and high school levels. In like manner, stakeholders such as UNESCO have invested in STEM clinics targeted at sensitizing girls on various STEM-related careers, as well as promote interaction among young female scientists to learn from the wide range of opportunities offered through STEM subjects.

However, these efforts are woefully inadequate to push more women and girls into STEM field. Thus, for Ghana to achieve gender equality and bridge the widening gap between men and women in science, Government in collaboration with other stakeholders must consciously invest in four key areas: 1) address all forms of poverty, 2) Invest in Ghana Education Service including eLearning, 3) organize competitions to unearth innovations in STEM and 4) leverage public-private partnership.

Address all forms of poverty: The study of STEM requires great investment and sacrifice in terms of time and money. For many females in deprived communities who have to engage in economic activities to support their families, skipping school and eventually dropping out is second nature.

Therefore, in line with achieving SDG 1 – ending poverty in all its forms – stakeholders must tackle the root cause of low involvement of females in STEM by creating opportunities to ameliorate financial challenges.

This can be done by awarding scholarships to girls who endeavor to study STEM courses at the SHS and tertiary school levels. Additionally, community engagement and male involvement in STEM can garner local support and raise local resources for women and girls in STEM.

Invest in Ghana Education Service: Political will, translated in strengthening the Ghana Education Service (GES), is key for increasing girls and women's involvement in STEM. Government must commit more resources to GES starting from the basic school level and in deprived communities.

The provision of adequate teaching and learning materials especially science and ICT laboratories in basic schools will enable pupils "connect the dots" between STEM theory and practice. eLearning through television programmes, mobile applications and other outlets should be promoted to generate more interest in STEM, as well as augment efforts of the few STEM teachers in the country.

Similarly, schools must be equipped with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities to make girls more comfortable to learn in schools during menstruation.

Organise competitions on STEM Innovations: Annual competitions on STEM innovations should be organised to whip up interests of women and girls in the subjects. Successful participants should be awarded scholarships/seed funding to scale up these innovations and contribute to industrial development in the country.

Promote public-private partnership: Finally, public-private partnership should be encouraged to increase investments in scientific research institutions, technology and engineering companies that will advance the career potentials of women and girls. Companies such as Kantanka Automobiles and Niche Chocolate should receive support from Government to make greater impact.

By: Esther Azasi.
(YDG Delegate)

Galamsey; a looming threat to Economic Development



Local artisanal mining is on the rise with little or less attention being paid to its long term effect. Artisanal mining, popularly known in Ghana as "Galamsey", are independent miners who have not been employed by a mining company or registered under the law to operate as an entity.

The Mining Law - PNDCL 218 which was established in 1989 prohibits individuals 18 years and above to operate or mine without a licence.

The true number of illegal artisanal mining is unknown. Globally, it is estimated that 20 million people in Africa are involved in Galamsey with nearly one quarter of the world's gold produced originating from local artisanal mining.

According to a 2013 World Bank report however, there are approximately 100 million artisanal miners globally with artisanal and small-scale production supply accounting for 80% of global sapphire, 20% of gold mining and up to 20% of diamond mining.

The World Bank also made a compilation report between 2012 and 2014 which highlighted the issues associated with the Artisanal and small-scale mining sector in the Central African country of Congo.

The report stated that the majority of people directly involved in the extraction of minerals at mining sites were extremely poor and vulnerable with women being subjected to sexual and economic exploitation.

Many individuals have lost their lives as a result of improper measures and methods and others suffered the same fate through direct contact with mercury poisoning. Galamsey has affected the Sustainable Development Goals which seek to provide clean water and proper sanitation in goal 6, sustainable cities and communities in goal 11 and climate action in goal 13.

Effects of Galamsey on the environment.

Artisanal mining has affected many lives and caused detrimental effects on plants, water and forest. Many people living in the rural areas suffer every day. Rivers and water bodies have been greatly polluted causing inhabitants living in Galamsey areas without viable economic options to a better livelihood. This situation has exerted significant pressure on the people who depend on the water and river for their daily livelihood and domestic activities.

Local artisanal mining does not only pollute rivers and other water bodies, it also leaves death traps which cause many individuals to lose their lives. Galamsey has also caused diseases such as cholera, dysentery, fever, amongst others with children suffering the most from this canker.

Galamsey and Government banter.

Despite the effort of government to curb this blight, many Galamsey miners are of the view that illegal mining is their only source of income. On 23rd April of this year, there was a viral video which depicted a man shamefully expressing his ignorance to the public as to why he was into Galamsey.

He also argued that the Government must retract from arresting persons involved in the act. According to the man who claims to live in East Legon, illegal mining is what generates income to him and his family. He cared less about the dangers and damage his insensitive actions has brought to people living in the community where he operates. He also appeared unaware of the domestic and environmental damage Galamsey is causing.

Despite the calls to end Galamsey in Ghana, government has succumbed to warnings and threats with little or no actions towards bringing individuals culpable of these deplorable activities to justice. Many have pointed out the Chinese community as the bane to Galamsey which has created a lot of banter between the media and the Chinese embassy. It's indeed laughable and sad to see the Chinese own up to their action but they use the excuse of only providing technical support and resources to people in the Galamsey areas.

The big question is, what will keep a Chinese man in a village far away from the main city of Accra and miles away from his own country? I doubt the answer is an appreciation of nature.

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Most people who have the ability to effect changes in the law have also covered to the threats of being blackmailed by an individual who claims to be in possession of sex videos showing people in power.

The government has to step up and act to avoid the total depletion of the environment. The law must work to save millions of people from being impacted negatively by abscess. The achievement of the sustainable development goals by 2030 cannot be attained if we do not strive hard to put measures in place for clean water, sustainable cities and communities and good health.

By: Juana A. Boateng.
(YDG Delegate)

Proliferation of Vigilante Groups in Ghana; A Threat to National Security?



H.E. Nana Addo Dankwah Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana.

The recent incidence of political vigilantism in Ghana after the December 2016 elections could mar Ghana's hard won reputation as the beacon of democracy in Africa.

A chronology of attacks on citizens and properties by vigilante groups purported to be aligned to the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) poses a real security threat to the country as the act of political vigilantism to gradually gain root in the country's body politic.

On 12th December, 2016, Invisible Forces- a vigilante group associated with the NPP raided the toll booth at the Tema end of the Tema-Accra Motorway to take charge of the

management of the booth but the police was fast to foil the plan. The group carried out a similar attack at Afienya toll booth on the Tema-Akosombo road also in the Greater Accra region.

There was also the attack on one George Agyei; the then newly appointed Regional Security Coordinator in Kumasi in the Ashanti region by another pro-NPP vigilante group known as Delta Force on 24 March 2017. The group claimed that the Security Chief didn't contribute to NPP's victory in the 2016 elections hence was dragged out of his office by over 200 members of this group.

The police afterward arrested 13 members of Delta Force vigilante group and arraigned them before a Kumasi Circuit court on 6th April, 2017 for conspiracy to assault a security capo.

A bizarre incidence happened at the court room that day where about 50 members of the group invaded the court cells and freed their cohorts disrupting the court process and overpowering the police.

The 13 members of the vigilante groups later surrendered to the police. Re-arraigned before court on 11th April, 2017, they were fined GHc2,400 (US\$567) each for escaping court or spend three years in prison should they default on the fine.

President Nana Akufo Addo on 10th April, 2017 condemned the recent vigilante group attacks and assured to bring perpetrators to book saying, "The events in Kumasi are being brought systematically under control in the way that they should be and we assure the nation that we are not wavering from the commitment that we made that we were going to serve Ghana under the conditions of the rule of law"

Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the Resident Coordinator of the UN system in Ghana, Christine-Evans Klock, in a statement signed jointly condemned the political vigilantism and called for justice to take its course.

Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in its second edition of 'Managing Election Related Conflict and Violence for Democratic Stability in Ghana II' published in 2016 identified below these vigilante groups in Ghana associated with the two main political parties.

According to the book, these groups provide security for party functionaries at political events and protect the party interests during polls.

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interests during polls.

	Groups	Party Affiliation	Location (Base)
1	Aluta Boys	NDC	Tamale
2	Bukurisung	NDC	Tamale
3	Tohazie	NDC	Tamale
4	Pentagon	NDC	Tamale
5	Gbewaa Youth	NDC	Tamale, Yendi
6	Azorka Boys	NDC	Tamale
7	66 Bench	NDC	Tamale
8	Al Qaeda	NDC	Tamale
9	Al Jazeera	NDC	Tamale
10	NATO Forces	NDC	Tamale
11	Rasta Boys	NDC	Agbogloshie
12	Se Se Group	NDC	Nima
13	Invincible Forces	NPP	Accra
14	Bamba Boys	NPP	Wenchi
15	Bolga Bulldogs	NPP	Navorongo, Sandema, Bawku, Bolga and Techiman
16	Kandahar Boys	NPP	Tamale

Source: KAIPTC

Outlook.

The 13 members of the Delta Force were to re-appear before court on 18th May, 2017 for the substantive case of assaulting a security coordinator to be adjudicated. A lenient punishment could be interpreted by the opposition to mean political interference by the sitting government but a harsh punishment is likely to deter other vigilante groups from committing such crimes.

Lack of professionalism exhibited by security agencies in dealing with politically related crimes is one of the reasons why political parties establish such vigilante groups. Should appointment of heads to security agencies be depoliticized, they could act more professionally in dealing with politically induced cases.

Again, provision of adequate logistics and increasing police personnel will help in the fight against political vigilantism. As at 2015, police-population ratio stood at 1:784 against UN standard of 1:500.

In an interview with Mr. Mustapha Abdallah of KAIPTC, he recommended a dialogue between security agencies and political parties to disband vigilante groups in Ghana's body politic to totally resolve this thorny issue.

It is said "the devil finds a job for an idle hand"; creation of jobs for the teaming unemployed youth could reduce political vigilantism in Ghana. For Ghana to consolidate its democracy, clamping down vigilante groups prior to the 2020 general elections is critical in fostering peace since clashes between these groups could degenerate into a serious security impasse especially before and during elections.

Going forward, abolishing the 'winner takes all' and adopting a multi-party approach to governance could reduce such instances of insecurity when there is a change in government.

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