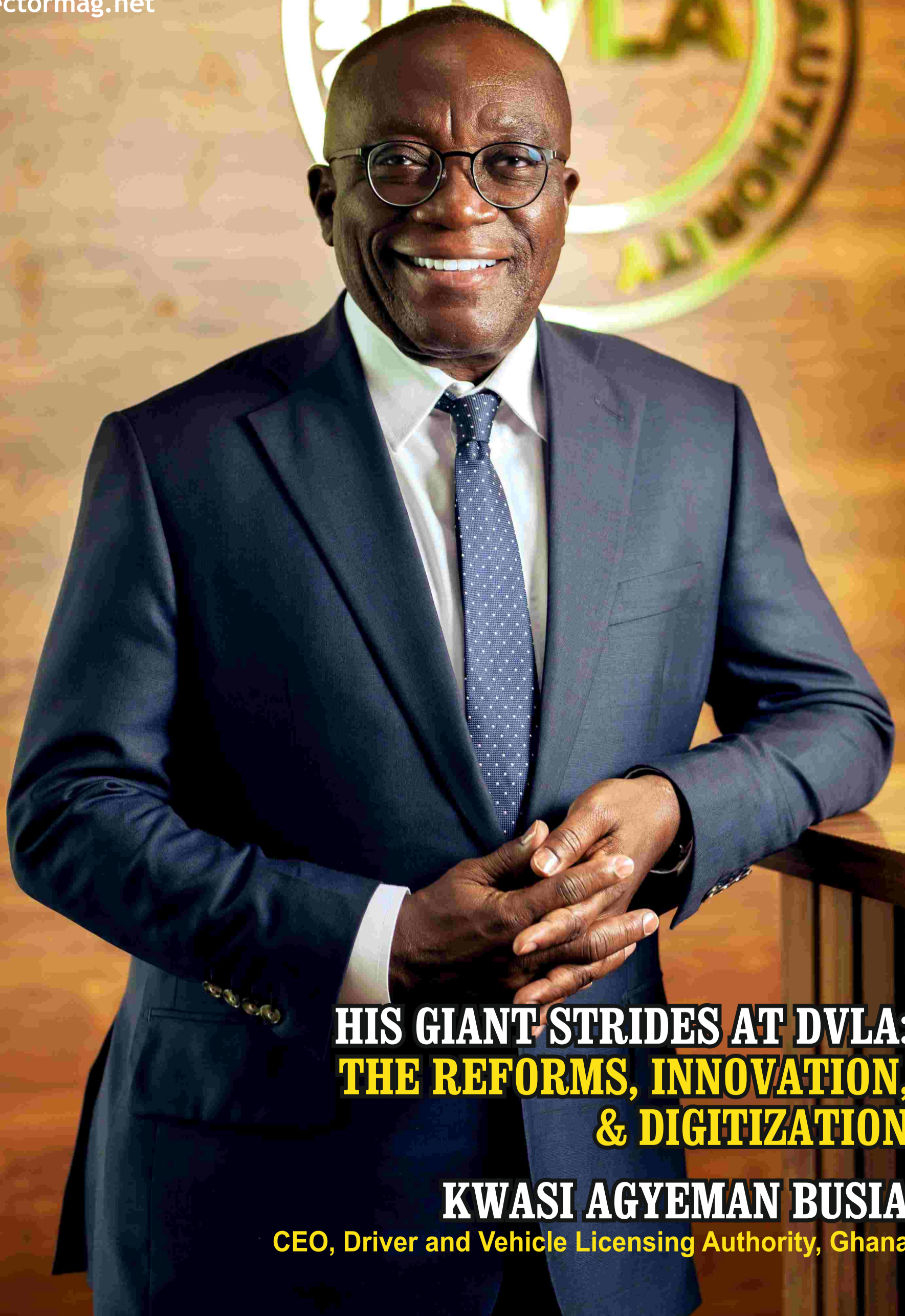


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**HIS GIANT STRIDES AT DVLA:
THE REFORMS, INNOVATION,
& DIGITIZATION**

KWASI AGYEMAN BUSIA

CEO, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority, Ghana

KWASI AGYEMAN BUSIA'S GIANT STRIDES AT DVLA: THE REFORMS, INNOVATION, & DIGITIZATION



Appointed to head one of the biggest public institutions was nowhere near his thoughts or goals 10 years prior to March 2017; much less running the affairs of an institution that had gained notoriety as the most corrupt government agency in the country. As he walked into his office that fateful morning on his first day at work, the only question that rang in his head was **“what have I gotten myself into?”** Being the new CEO of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) that had been taken over by middle men alias the “goro community,” corrupt practices and distasteful service delivery, Mr. Kwasi Agyeman Busia vowed to change the narrative. **“I’ll tell you. I have an office at home. I would sit and stare at the wall and digest documents for hours and look at the situation at DVLA back then- and ask myself why can’t we move from one point to the other, why can’t we provide better products and customer service? I needed results. I will go home, meditate about the problem stare at the wall and began to draw a plan night after night”** He recalls.

Five Years down the line, DVLA is not just a transformed government institution, it tops the list as number one in service delivery in Ghana’s Public sector.

In this bare it all interview with Africa Public Sector Magazine, Mr. Busia takes us through the journey of DVLA’s face lift, how the notorious ‘goro community’ were subdued and attempts at eliminating them from the system by leveraging People, Process and Technology to obtain an autonomous, efficient and sustainable DVLA with customer service delivery

strategies in place.....

What led to the drastic reforms that have taken place since you assumed your role as CEO?

I pulled up in the parking lot at DVLA head office on March 10, 2017, that was my first day at work; my car radio was on one radio station, and DVLA was being referred to as the most corrupt government institution in the country. DVLA & another public institution actually topped the list of corrupt government institutions in the country. This is my first day on the job, I was yet to even meet the team I would be working with. Even my driver was new to me. I got out of the car asking what I had gotten myself into? When I met with my team, I reiterated what I had just heard on the radio, and I told them emphatically that by the end of my tenure at DVLA, the story would have to change and the institution would no longer be on that notorious list. There was a loud ovation in the room, and in all honesty, I had no idea the depth of what I had said and how it would happen.

What are some of the reforms and how were you able to implement them?

Management and I started looking at the problem; worked seven days a week straight for three months, until we came to three specific conclusions about our inefficiency- Our products were not unique, they were untimely, unsecured, and the processes were laborious and non-transparent. There was a strategic plan that had been developed for 2016-2021, which was still in operation, I had

to get acclimated to it, in addition to the strategic plan, I imbibed the content and ‘spirit’ of it. After a complete analysis, we fine-tuned it and worked with the Board of directors, the Minister, and management to broaden and make it practicable. We then developed the narration for it and went to work...

We developed what we called the six strategic pillars, identifying the six main things we needed to do to move this authority forward and at the centre of that was customer service.

The goal was to develop, digitize, and create unique products in a timely fashion, at an affordable rate, and of superior value.

The alternative illegal (‘goro’) gives you fake products, at an exorbitant price, and when the police stop you, you will not be able to produce a government-approved document.

How did we sell this strategic plan? We got all the management in one place, in one space, and unveiled the six strategic pillars to them, the pillars were image uplift, Service optimization, financial autonomy and sustainability, Human capital development, and research and business development. Customer service was the pivot, the centrality of all things we aspire to achieve.

We met in Sogakope, and this is important because I had representatives from every district and region in the room and unveiled the six pillars emphasizing on plugging leakages and transforming the authority.

We subsequently met in Kumasi where we developed a

business plan from the strategic plan, we gave every district and region two years to have maximum impact and increase revenue two-fold, “double-double” we called it. We tried to make things happen quickly, and improve the idea of human relations, through the foundational theme—The people, process, and technology. For every pillar that we had, there was an admixture of these three foundational frameworks embedded to produce desired results. Therefore, instead of obtaining a driver's license through a process that went through twenty stages, we reduced it to a 6-stage process, and then automation was made key. Whenever we could avoid a man-to-man or human interaction we achieved something because face-to-face interactions inevitably led to some possible form of corruption – doors being closed, whispers in the lobbies, all came to a stop. Everything was open, the pricing of our services was on the wall, the offices were labelled so you know what we did when you walked in. You were in a predictable environment and not in some abstract situation where somebody has to tell you what to do.

We moved to the product after we achieved desired results in the process. We realized that the driver's license that we had then, could be duplicated very easily, so we came up with a digitized, biometric-driven product. In November 2017, eight months after I resumed office, the Vice President unveiled the new driver's license and that's when we stepped it up to regain our customer base lost to the “goro community”.

We also looked at the other side of our mandate which is the vehicle registration and digitized all vehicle records since 1995 and made the process more efficient. The goal was to ensure the vehicle registration process is completed in an hour.

In a nutshell, we brought automation, we leveraged our people, we abridged processes and we infused technology, not just the driver's license, but from roadworthy to vehicle registration and a whole lot of other products we have.

The principles of People, Process, and Technology were fundamental to everything we've done today.

At what point did you come up with the prestige customer service centre?

After changing our processes and making the products more affordable and timelier, we came out with a scheme - Prestige, Premium, and Regular. Prestige means you get your license in 30 minutes, premium- two weeks, and regular is about a month; compared to the three-five years' timelines we used to have in the past. This is what necessitated the prestige customer service centre. It was created strictly as an option for those who preferred prestige services and get their license within 30 minutes. This has been transformational because it had not been done before in terms of getting a driver's license within a very short period and of good quality.

How impactful has the smart driver's license been?

Well, we moved from the badge system, that was a long time before you were born. During that era, they had badges - a metal badge it evolved into a booklet and then they had a PVC card and we came in with the biometric card. The impact can be seen in more revenue generation, unique and securitized products and a dent in 'goro' illegal activity and results-oriented staff with performance targets etc.

People make reforms possible? How did you get your people reforms oriented?

I came in when the staff had not had many career path definitions and training with clarity on how they should move from point A to point B. Management, with assistance from the Board of directors, created an HR department. Hitherto they had finance and administration, meanwhile, we wanted employees with a definite focus on compensation unit, learning and development and general employee welfare as their charge. Since 2018, we have had about seventy (70) training

sessions, not just seminars; I'm referring to actual classes for career and welfare improvement. We are taking care of staff healthcare as well as their immediate dependents, this helps staff focus better at work.

How will you rate service delivery at DVLA?

DVLA leads in service delivery, based on the 2021 Ghana Customer Service Index on public service delivery; we are number one in the public sector. Competing against all the big institutions and we emerged number one, this is of much gratification to all of us at DVLA.

The very entity – Transparency International -Ghana Integrity Initiative that described us as most corrupt, 3 years later on, gave us an award as most improved in administrative policies, and 5 years we were adjudged best in customer service in the public sector by Ghana Customer Service Index. We are on a transformative journey and 'we have miles to go before we sleep.'



Do you nurse fears that after your tenure, things could go wrong?

Not really. I'll explain why. We do not rely exclusively on individuals; we also have a succession plan. We depend on systems, not people; for the time being, I'm merely the poster child for our transformation drive supported by many other individuals but we are creating systems that communicate with one another to further create an integrated set of systems, a digitized ecosystem.

Change is usually met with stiff opposition. What are some of the challenges you faced during your early days in the office?

In the beginning, I intuited that there were times I would hold a meeting at the office and by the time it was all over, presumably somebody would have leaked the counter strategy to the 'goro boys'. It was an incredible situation. One cannot do everything by oneself, I needed a trusted circle, so we came together and began to build it. One other rough time for me that sticks out, was the first aid kit. The concept was good. The idea was for people who were involved in an accident and didn't have a way of going to the hospital or access to a health care facility immediately, bandages etc were good to an equipped facility to sustain and assist them. The concept of first aid in vehicles has always been in the books of DVLA but was never implemented, so I thought it was a great idea, the concept was good. However, we botched up the implementation and we did not do enough

public education before deploying the kits- a lesson learned... deployment to be preceded by comprehensive education.

Will you say you are educating the citizenry enough on your policies?

Right now, we are deploying eye test reform, some of the managers wanted it done quickly but experience says no, we are not rushing to do this. There are commercial drivers carrying passengers who may be partially blind, driving on streets with very bad lighting, coupled up with the rains, their peripheral vision is seemingly gone. Bad eyesight may well be a contributor to some of the accidents we have on our roads and we're trying to solve that problem. So yes, we are taking our time to educate the public on our policies.

What has been your greatest achievement as the CEO?

The transformation agenda. I'm talking about people, not just systems being transformed. Seamless systems have been built and this is good but I'm more proud of the

person/staff member I saw in March 2017 and what he/she has become today. And the good news is that people/culture transformation is infectious. It is because, if somebody does it right and well, the person in the next office also imitates it. Sometimes even unconsciously. I'm also proud of the motivated team we are building. When you are hired you go through an onboarding process with us for about a week, where you get to hear what you should expect. We orient about the vision, the objective and that one could acquire skills that could be leveraged with us, and elsewhere, so the onboarding is intense.

How would you describe your leadership style?

Transformational, I will say in all modesty- democratic, transactional, and sometimes even confrontational.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

I will like to believe that I am approachable, friendly and passionate.

How do you relax?

I like music a lot, I read, I'm reading a Donald Trump book now, but I don't get to read as voraciously as I used to and I do TikTok.

If you had three wishes what will they be?

A world full of peace, where there are no more wars and racial discrimination. Secondly, economic success in my home country, so people don't have to risk their lives to go to other countries in search of greener pastures. People go through incredible means in search of a better life. The third is good health for my loved ones, my family, and me because, without that, you do not even start to live.

What are some of the factors you think are responsible for your success today?

My mother is big in this and I have had mentors. If I were to advise people who are coming of age and trying to make a career, I will tell them to find a mentor, 'shop' for one, and get one. You need somebody who inspires you and guides you. I have had a few in my time and so you are a product of your environment. There will be challenges and tough times you going to fail, you're going to make mistakes, and will have bad days; you need to have an inspirer, somebody that would let you get up, dust yourself up and do it again. There is no great person in any book that you read that did not fail sometimes, the real answer is how many times you fell and how many times did you get up. Therefore, you need that. Also, I tell the young ones to read, read anything and everything that comes their way. You have no idea where it would stand you in good stead in the future, from magazines to newspapers- read anything, but as you read just for pleasure something that is in the memory could kick in at a time you need it to assist you and/or someone else.

BOST MAKES REMARKABLE TURNAROUND, RECORDS ₵168.8 MILLION PROFIT AFTER 11 YEARS OF LOSSES



The Bulk Oil Storage and Transportation Company Limited (BOST) has recorded a performance of ₵160.7 million in profit terms in 2021, against a loss of ₵291.07 million in 2020.

The company's revenue from gasoline sales increased from ₵140 million in 2020 to ₵341 million in 2021 representing 144% while diesel sales also jumped from ₵227 million in 2020 to ₵331 million in 2021, making an increase of 46%.

Revenue from the BOST marine transportation business also shot up from ₵2.9 million in 2020 to ₵14.9 million in 2021 accounting for 412% with storage and rack revenue seeing a steady growth of 4% from ₵50 million in 2020 to ₵52.6 million in 2021.

Mr. Ekow Hackman, the Board chairman, disclosed this at the company's first Annual General Meeting in Accra recently.

He said the company had made progress over the past few years which had transformed it from a heavily indebted company owing more than 624 million dollars as of January 2017 to one with debts of less than 30 million dollars at the end of 2021.

"We have restored the business model in which the company was established, to have a number of operational fuel depots placed in strategic parts of the country linked by a network of pipelines and barges to enable secure and cost-effective delivery of fuel products around the country," Mr. Hackman said.

The Board Chairman said the restoration of part of the lost value of the company margin by Government in June 2021 has brought an element of financial stability to the company.

"This levy on the petroleum price ensures that BOST can repair and maintain facilities in parts of the country such as Bolgatanga, Buipe, Savelugu and Akosombo areas where private profit-oriented companies would not readily venture," Mr. Hackman said.

He said the transformation of the company's infrastructure as well as its commercial operations have been accompanied by a strong emphasis on governance and compliance.

Mr. Hackman said the Board has established a Board Charter to guide its work as well as charters for its individual committees, adding that in line with international best practice.

"We also introduced a Risk Committee which oversees the activities of the new Risk Unit introduced by the management which was seen as indispensable during these increasing turbulent times which has led to developments such as the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war," Mr. Hackman said.

He expressed the hope that key strategic initiatives that have commenced which included the upgrading projects will place the company at par with other terminals that have state-of-the-art equipment and will establish the company as the market leader nationwide.

Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh, Minister for Energy commended the company for its sterling performance during the year under review.

He said the government was sparing no effort at ensuring that BOST resourced to hold stocks to fulfil its mandate.

Dr Opoku Prempeh said for a sustainable solution to our fuel challenges, the government was working to ensure efficient Tema Oil Refinery compliments the efforts of BOST by refining products and delivering same to the company for storage and distribution to ensure the Ghanaian petrol product consumer is saved from the difficulty of high prices of products due to the desire to make a profit or global challenges.

"Government does not invest in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to sit back and watch them making chain of losses from one fiscal year to the other," he said.

He added that the Public Enterprises Ministry and State Investment Governance Authority (SIGA) will leave no efforts behind in encouraging and leading SOEs to deliver their mandate and help the government to make the lives of the people better.

ECG INSTALLS OVER 9,000 PREPAID METERS IN KROBO LAND DESPITE PROTESTS



Mr. Samuel Mahama, Managing Director of the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) has disclosed that about 9,000 prepaid meters have so far been successfully installed in the Krobo land.

Mr. Mahama said the exercise was still ongoing as more than 20,000 prepared meters were expected to be installed in the area.

He disclosed this to the media during a working visit to the Somanya ECG office to interact with staff on the installation.

"We can see that quite a good number have been welcoming our efforts and we are well within the 9,000 of prepaid meter installations, out of over 20,000, we are still ongoing, after meeting the staff today they are going back to work, the numbers are encouraging," he said.

He added that more towns in the area were accepting the prepaid meters, and the Company therefore would complete the exercise in suitable time, adding that he hoped consensus would be reached at the areas that have some misunderstanding for smooth installation.

He stated that there were still a few disturbances on the line, which they were working on, and gave the assurance that they were working hard to ensure customers had a reliable power supply for their livelihood.

The ECG MD said to ensure that those who were yet to allow the installation would embrace it, education and engagement were still ongoing to let the people know what the prepaid metering was about, its efficiency, and how it allowed customers to control their own consumption.

He said the strategy going forward was to disconnect areas that refused the installation of the prepaid meters instead of putting off the power of the entire Krobo enclave.

Mr. Mahama stressed that "the areas that refused us, the network has been dropped and moved away until consensus is reached, it's not going to be like first that the whole enclave is put out, it's going to be treated on a town-by-town basis, so we look forward to having a fruitful working condition."

On the vending stations, Mr. Mahama explained that vending stations were established at the end of installation in an area, therefore, such stations could not be done before installation as the number of meters in an area and customers to be served would have to be considered in setting up the stations.

Answering a question on the use of military officers for the installation, the ECG Managing Director explained that his outfit needed several engineers to ensure the success of the exercise within a certain period, and therefore made effective use of the Military engineers to augment the efforts of ECG engineers.

Mr. Mahama said it was sad that some misunderstanding ensued during the installation.

He added however that even though ECG was not happy about such happenings, they would not take the blame for it as a report on the incident was yet to come out and therefore would prefer to wait and have the proper appraisal of what happened, so management could make the right decision.

He thanked the chiefs and the people of Krobo for allowing them to install the prepaid meters, while appreciating the national security for their efforts in helping them to control situations that came up.

He also urged the media to report accurately on happenings at Krobo to ensure they do not inflame passions but promote peace to ensure the smooth completion of the exercise.

BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER, LLEWELLYN SAYS EDUCATING GIRLS IS SMART FORM OF INVESTMENT



many great girls' education projects, including in Nigeria.

"We support Nigeria's efforts to implement the safe school's declaration, so as part of our work we are supporting a more holistic peace and security strategy that addresses current challenges on conflict and insecurity," he said.

Llewellyn-Jones said that they would continue to support Nigeria in its efforts to deliver quality education, as well as build a peaceful and safe society for the next generation.

Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, special guest of honour at the lecture, urged LASU management to keep moving the institution to greater heights.

She charged the management to strive to be the best university in West Africa.

Tinubu, represented by Mrs Bola Badmus, former Deputy Speaker, Lagos State House of Assembly, congratulated the Vice-Chancellor and LASU community for maintaining education growth.

Dr Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, wife of Lagos State Governor, in her remarks, appealed to the LASU community to put into use and maintain all the facilities inaugurated to mark the anniversary.

Represented by Mrs Nkem Shofela, she congratulated the management of LASU for great achievements within a year and prayed for more to come.

According to report, it says several projects were inaugurated to celebrate the first anniversary of the Vice-Chancellor. These includes a CCTV control room, 20 blocks of toilets, Staff club, LASU bakery and two blocks of skills acquisition centre.

The British Deputy High Commissioner in Lagos, Mr. Ben Llewellyn-Jones said supporting girls' education is a game changer and smart investment that can boost Nigeria's economy.

Llewellyn-Jones said this recently at the public lecture to mark the first anniversary of Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello's assumption of office as the 9th substantive Vice-Chancellor, Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, in Lagos.

The theme of the lecture was: "The Significance of Education to the Growth of a Nation".

He said that girl education was one of the smartest investments that could be made to lift people out of poverty.

The diplomat said it could grow economies, save lives and build back better from COVID-19 pandemic.

"Research shows that a child whose mother can read is 50 per cent more likely to live beyond the age of five and 50 per cent more likely to be immunised against major potential infections.

"The UK government recognises these benefits and champions the right of every girl in the world to receive 12 years of quality education.

"We are especially proud that UK aid is supporting

Member of Parliament secures drilling rig to provide water in his constituency



Hon. Abanga added that his "Binduri Must Develop Agenda" mantra is not just a mere political statement but is doable urging constituents to support the vision and develop Binduri together

The first time MP who doubles as Ghana's Deputy Minister for Works and Housing made this known via a Facebook post on Thursday, 1st September 2022 indicating that he is committed to bringing to finality the lifelong water problem in the constituency.

"I am elated to inform the good people of Binduri that by the grace of God, I've successfully acquired the drilling rig which I promised them in the run-up to the 2020 general elections. I took delivery of it some months ago and it's currently in Binduri for the past weeks.

The brand new DTHR-300-350 latest Ashok Leyland Cabin Truck Mounted Water Well Drilling rig is mounted with an Air compressor, strong 18.5 feet mast length, Drill rods, Heavy-duty Centrifugal mud Pump, welding generator, night lighting, and other rig operating accessories and has the capacity of drilling a depth up to 350 Meters (1200 feet)" he said.

He further indicated that a total of 10 boreholes have been successfully drilled in communities including Atuba, Zawse and Bansi.

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Member of Parliament (MP) for Binduri Constituency in the Upper East Region of Ghana, Abdulai Abanga, has taken a giant step towards addressing water scarcity in communities within his constituency. The MP in the run-up to the 2020 general elections promised to purchase the drilling rig to help provide potable drinking water to constituents.

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VICE PRESIDENT BAWUMIA TOUTS GOVERNMENT GENDER-FRIENDLY POLICIES IN BARBADOS



The Vice President of the Republic of Ghana Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia has told a high-level Africa Caribbean summit in Barbados how the government has been implementing policies to address the issues of gender inequality in the country.

Addressing gender inequality from an African perspective was one of the topics discussed during an interactive session of the summit, and responding to a question on how African governments are dealing with it, Dr Bawumia took his audience through several policies and interventions, which he said were aimed at bridging the gap between males and females in many aspects of life.

Dr Bawumia focused on education, health and using technology to achieve gender parity in financial inclusion.

Below is his response to a question posed to him on dealing with gender parity from an African perspective:

“In Ghana close to about 52% of the population is female and so that is the majority population.

“Historically the issue has been exclusion, and if you are going to get the type of development that is required, you definitely need inclusion and therefore you need to create gender equality

“The vehicles we are using in Ghana for example, in creating gender equality is in the area of education. One of the things that we saw was the high levels of dropouts in females when

you get to the secondary level. And usually, when you get to the cost of secondary education, many parents are unwilling or unable to bear the cost of that education and usually the females tended to suffer in the choice matrix of which of their children should go to school.

“So, when we came into office in 2017 we instituted a policy of free senior secondary education for all. We have done that since 2017 and it has just been remarkable. You've had hundreds of thousands of children who otherwise would not have had senior high school education now enrolled.

“What is now important in this context is that now you have more girl enrollees than boys. So, whereas you had inequality or gender inequality in the school mix before, we now have virtual parity between boys and girls in secondary school enrolment and that is more important in trying to create more gender parity in society.

“Recently one of our girls' schools won a world robotic competition, beating countries like Germany, South Korea, and the United States and we think that part of this is just the opportunity to learn because some of those girls, without the free senior high school opportunity, would not have had all of that.

“Another area of getting inclusion is the financial inclusion. When you look at the data, you tended to see that most of the people who did not have access to bank accounts were

females. So, what we have done is, because most of them have mobile phones, to introduce mobile money interoperability which makes the mobile money account interoperable with a bank account so with that interoperability most people, about 90% of the population now have access to bank accounts.

“And you have the whole area of maternal mortality and how you will bring down cases, especially in the rural areas by making sure that mothers who are giving birth have access to critical blood supplies during birth. Ghana, following Rwanda, has introduced drones to deliver medical supplies, and vaccines to remote areas and today Ghana has the world's largest medical drone delivery.

“Most people don't know that but that is where we are. We have about six drone Centres and each day, you have about 100 flights from each of the Centres and each flight is saving a life and that is what you'll see in Ghana.

“This tells us that Africa and the Caribbean can be in the lead when it comes to the technologies because we don't have legacy systems and therefore we can leapfrog in many areas and this is one area I think we can all work on. I think that the more we use technology to build an inclusive society, the more gender parity we create and that is how we should proceed.”

Dr Bawumia led a government delegation to the Conference, which discussed cooperation and development between Africa and the Caribbean.

FDA GHANA'S LABORATORY IS THE FIRST TO ATTAIN WHO PREQUALIFICATION IN THE ECOWAS SUB-REGION



The FDA's WHO-Prequalified Quality Control Laboratory

The Drugs Laboratory at the Centre for Laboratory Services and Research (CLSR) of the Ghana Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has been awarded a WHO-Prequalified Quality Control Laboratory (QCL) Status.

By this achievement, the FDA is now the only food and drugs regulatory agency within the ECOWAS subregion to be recognized internationally as a competent institution that can test medicines and medical products under WHO auspices. The results of medicines tested by the FDA will therefore henceforth become acceptable to all countries.

The benefits of this new status of the FDA include the following: The Laboratory will serve as a Regional Centre of Excellence and train other National Drug Regulatory Agencies in the sub region; The FDA can fully participate in international tenders to analyse products that are to be procured by UN agencies, such as UNICEF and the Global Fund; and The Certificate of Analysis for locally manufactured medicines in Ghana shall receive international recognition and thereby boost their permeation into the international market. With the prequalified lab in Ghana, the African

Continental Free Trade Area provides additional opportunity to Ghanaian pharmaceutical companies within the Africa market.

The FDA's Laboratory has by this feat become a key international player in the testing and verifying of Finished Pharmaceutical Products to ensure that they meet international standards of safety, quality, and efficacy, and will therefore require all the necessary support to maintain this new status.

Additionally, it is to be noted that, once the FDA's Laboratory has become a prequalified QCL, the FDA may be invited to participate in WHO prequalification monitoring projects that are undertaken periodically to assess the quality of medicines procured by UN agencies.

With this accomplishment by the FDA's laboratory as the only WHO-prequalified laboratory in the ECOWAS subregion, the Authority is in readiness and poised to provide effective regulation to support the national vaccine manufacturing agenda, and ensure access to quality, safe and efficacious vaccines and medicines for the nation and the African Continent.

GHANA EXIM BANK LAUNCHES GEXIM MiG TOWN

The Ghana Export-Import Bank (GEXIM) has launched its first GEXIM Made-In-Ghana (MiG) Town at its head office, located at the Africa Trade House in Accra, opposite Cedi House.

The GEXIM MiG Town is an outlet that stocks assorted, innovative and well-packaged Made-In-Ghana products including food and ingredients, beverages, skin and beauty care products, textiles, apparel, garments, leather footwear and slippers and many others.

The GEXIM MiG Town will be opened to the general public from Mondays to Fridays between the hours of 9:00am and 6:00pm. It is designed to be a one-stop shop for everything Made-In-Ghana at unbeatable prices and the highest quality.

The Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry and Member of Parliament for the New Juaben South Constituency, Hon. Michael Okyere Baafi joined the Management of GEXIM and other key stakeholders to successfully launch the first GEXIM MiG Town.

On his part, Hon. Michael Okyere Baafi commended the management of GEXIM for the laudable initiative to support Ghanaian SME. “I am very excited about the GEXIM MiG Town knowing how beneficial it will be to the Ghanaian SMEs in various ways. This is very important in contributing to the development and growth of the Ghanaian SME industry and I urge all stakeholders to help in promoting the Ghanaian agenda”, he stated.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer of GEXIM responsible for Banking, Rosemary Beryl Archer



spoke about the Bank's rationale for introducing the GEXIM MiG Town concept and its objective.

“In line with our mandate to plan, promote, develop and finance export-oriented concerns as well as provide support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) engaged in agro-processing and export trade, management of the Bank introduced the GEXIM Tuesday Market to provide a platform for SMEs to showcase their products for exposure and patronage. Following the huge success achieved with the GEXIM Tuesday Market, management thought of a concept to help in driving the campaign for Ghanaians to patronise Ghanaian made products, thereby sustaining the businesses of Ghanaian SMEs. The GEXIM MiG Town is a hub for the best of Ghanaian made products”, she explained.

She added that “people will now have a one-stop shop to get the very best of Ghanaian made products at unbeatable prices and highest quality. This is a huge step in the campaign for people to patronise Ghanaian products and help the Ghanaian SMEs to scale up. We welcome all Ghanaian SMEs with innovative products to bring samples for the GEXIM MiG Town. Management is considering setting up GEXIM MiG Towns in other parts of the country”.

Over the years, the Bank has introduced several initiatives to help in the repositioning of the Ghanaian economy into a feasible and sustainable export led economy.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, GHANA TOURISM AUTHORITY PARTNER TO LAUNCH 'DECEMBER IN GH' 2022 INITIATIVE



The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, in partnership with the Ghana Tourism Authority have launched the 'December in Gh' initiative at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra recently. The 'December in Gh' initiative which aims at promoting Ghana as a December holiday season destination, not only for the Ghanaian diaspora but for the global diaspora family saw prominent personalities such as the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Hon Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, CEO of Ghana Tourism Authority Mr. Akwasi Agyeman, President for NAACP Mr. Derrick Johnson, CEO of GIPC Mr. Yofi Grant, Women in Tourism Ambassador Nancy Sam, Deputy Minister for Tourism Mr. Mark Okraku-Mantey, traditional leaders, diasporas and industry players amongst others gracing the event.

Mr. Akwasi Agyeman, CEO of Ghana Tourism Authority, during his welcome speech, said 'December in Gh' is one of the biggest activations in the tourism sector and one that touches on the three pillars of the ministry, tourism, arts and culture. Over the last few years especially in 2019, there has been an increasing interest in Ghana as a destination for people looking for fun, pleasure, and culture therefore the initiative is going to be one that will connect the African family together and not only boost the economy.

Speaking at the launch of the event, Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture Hon Dr. Ibrahim Mohammed Awal said "Today as we launch 'December in Gh' 2022, we take pride in seeing Ghana continue to be the leading country of choice for travel during the holiday season in West Africa. Since the launch of our 'December in Gh' initiative, we have seen more Ghanaians and Africans in the diaspora making a trip back home for the holiday season to enjoy their time with family and friends."

"In April last year, President Akufo Addo launched the 'Destination Ghana' to welcome people from the diaspora and in 2019/2020, he launched the Beyond the Return which placed a spotlight on Ghana's Pan-Africa credentials. These two campaigns helped Ghana lately and GTA has indicated that we have gotten four hundred thousand visitors already in the half of this year. We intend to get 1 million this year and if by June we have gotten this number, we will certainly achieve the 1 million mark I want to thank GTA and all stakeholders for this enviable achievement. Aside from the aforementioned, we will be constructing a 10-million-dollar tourism training school next year to improve the customer care activities of our people. This will not only offer services to tourists in Ghana but the global diaspora as a whole" he stated

According to the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, 'December in Gh' is a very important initiative therefore he wants to use this opportunity to proclaim to the world that Ghana is willing to receive a thousand people who want to come here.

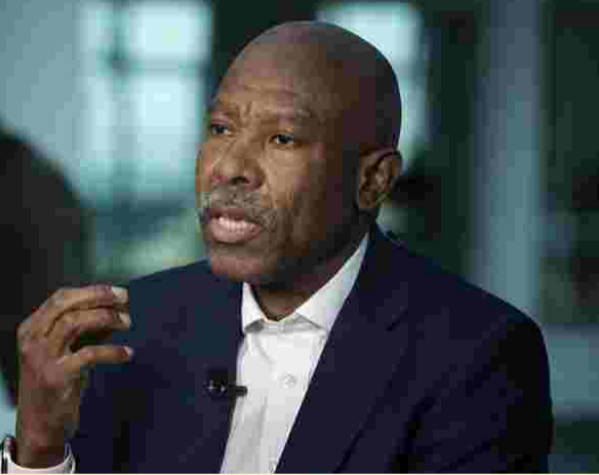
He urged all to continue to serve Ghana and make the country the most distinct brand in Africa.

As part of the launch, there was also an "Eat Ghana Food Fair", an initiative to sell the county's local delicacies to diasporans and other patrons present at the event.

Events to anticipate during the 'December in Gh' initiative include Afrochella, Afro Nation, Rhythms on the Runway, and Little Havana amongst others. There have also been additions of new entries, and these include Bukom Boxing Fiesta, The Africa Legends, and Westside Carnival amongst others. Details of all the activities will be released in the coming weeks.

BY: Diella Teku / InstinctWave

SOUTH AFRICA CENTRAL BANK RAISES KEY RATE TO 5.5%



South Africa's central bank has raised its benchmark interest rate by three-quarters of a percentage point to 5.5 percent, the steepest hike in a decade.

The move announced a day after South Africa reported a 13-year high in inflation was the fourth rate hike in a row, as the South African Reserve Bank voiced concerns over high inflation and weak economic growth.

The central bank "decided to increase the repurchase rate by 75 basis points to 5.50 percent per year," with effect from Friday, said governor Lesetja Kganyago.

"We hear the cries of South Africans that inflation is eroding their income, their salaries and their wages," he said. "And we are determined as the South African Reserve Bank to protect the income of South Africans."

The rate lift was higher than market analysts' forecasts of an increase of 50 basis points. Inflation has soared to the highest level in decades in many countries, fuelled by the war in Ukraine and the easing of Covid restrictions.

That has forced central banks across the globe to hike interest rates, risking the prospect of recession as higher borrowing costs hurt businesses and consumers.

The country's statistics agency, StatsSA, however said annual consumer inflation had jumped to 7.4 percent in June -- the highest reading since 2009 -- driven by rising prices for food and transport.

Kganyago said the rate increase aimed to help bring inflation back down to the bank's target band of three to six percent.

Kganyago also announced updated economic forecasts.

He said the South African economy is now expected to grow by two percent to this year, an upwards revision from the May forecast of 1.7 percent. That is still a drop from the 4.9 percent growth South Africa registered in 2021.

Growth is expected to slow down further to 1.3 percent in 2023, before edging higher to 1.5 percent in 2024, which are downward revisions, he added. The bank revised higher its forecast of headline inflation for this year to 6.5 percent.

NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANY LIMITED TRANSITIONS INTO A COMMERCIAL OIL COMPANY



sign the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) in 2021, heralding the long-awaited reform of the petroleum sector.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Timipre Sylva, said the unveiling of NNPC Limited was a new dawn in the quest for the growth and development of the Nigerian oil and gas industry, opening new vintages for partnerships.

"While the country was waiting for the PIA, Nigeria's oil and gas industry lost about \$50 billion worth of investments. In fact, between 2015 and 2019, KPMG states that "only 4 per cent of the \$70 billion investment inflows into Africa's oil and gas industry came to Nigeria even though the country is the continent's biggest producer and the largest reserves,"

"We are setting all these woes behind us, and a clear path for the survival and growth of our petroleum industry is now before us. With the PIA assuring international and local oil companies of adequate protection for their investments, the nation's petroleum industry is no longer rudderless. And I have no doubt the leadership of this brand new Limited Liability Company is super-charged to meet the high expectations." Mr. Sylva added.

Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) has successfully transitioned from a state-manage oil entity to a commercial oil company.

President Muhammadu Buhari unveiled the new Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) indicating that NNPC Limited now will operate as a commercial oil company with over 200 million shareholders with integrity and excellence.

The company's operations will now be regulated by the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA). The legal transition, based on the new Petroleum Industry Act, took effect July 1.

"We are transforming our petroleum industry to strengthen the growth today" Mr Buhari said.

According to him, The NNPC completed its incorporation in September last year weeks after the PIA was signed into law by President Buhari.

The new entity is expected to become a commercially oriented and profit-driven national petroleum company independent of government, although government bodies remain its shareholders. It will be audited annually.

As a sign of history Buhari revealed how privilege he was to lead the creation of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in July 1, 1977. Forty-Four years later, he was again privileged to



PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI

EU PARTNERS GWCL AND GVWC TO PROVIDE MORE INCLUSIVE WATER SERVICES IN SIERRA LEONE



The European Union and UN-Habitat partnership between Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL), Guma Valley Water Company (GVWC) and the Dutch VEI kicks start to provide more inclusive water service in Sierra Leone.

In April 2021, the programme received 142 applications. After a two-stage selection process, the GWCL-GVWC-VEI WOP was among the 22 projects selected.

The EU-WOP Programme will allocate \$250,000 grant, funding the GWCL, GVWC and VEI partnership aimed at making the unserved visible, serving them in a sustainable way by strengthening the GVWC's organisation accordingly. The project is one of the very few approved funding applications with an African lead partner and offers an excellent opportunity to build upon the prevailing twinning arrangement between GWCL and GVWC and further strengthen it with the support of VEI.

Over a 36-month period, the GWCL Low Income Customer Support Department (LICSD) will take the lead in supporting GVWC's goal of better serving vulnerable populations.

The project will greatly contribute to the desired transformation of GVWC towards

better service delivery by supporting the development of the GVWC pro-poor activities and elevating its position as an organization. The partnership aims to contribute towards the SDG 6 targets by embracing the "leave no one behind" principle.

Upon signing the agreement in March 2022 in a special signing ceremony at the World Water Forum in Dakar with the presence of Sierra Leone's Minister for Water Resources and Ghana's Chief Director at the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, GWCL & GVWC Managing Directors, and other interested stakeholders representing the different parties, GWCL undertook a maiden visit in July 2022 to Sierra Leone's GVWC to kick start the project.



Ghana Export Promotion Authority embarks on "THIS IS GHANA" exhibition

Ghana Export Promotion Authority has embarked on a two-day exhibition initiative which provides platforms for showcasing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and also providing them with guidance as to how they can get into the export space, to enable them generate more revenue.

The project titled "This is Ghana" saw the Vice President of Ghana, Dr Mahamudu Bawumia passing through in support of the good work undertaken by GEPA.

The project gave space to close to 200 exhibitors with partner organizations displaying a wide range of inventive products, processed meals and beverages, home & office basics, derivatives of cocoa products, industrial art and craft things, to name a few.

This programme comes at the back of the Authorities goal at facilitation, development and promotion of Ghanaian exports.

"This is Ghana" Offered a unique opportunity to showcase local SMEs, local industry innovations, made-in-Ghana products and indigenous service offerings from start-ups, home-grown businesses and indigenous corporate bodies such as GEPA that provide enablers to enhance the work of the private sector.

Speaking in an interview Ag. Director, Public Relations at GEPA, Ruth Maafo also revealed GEPA's target to generate an amount of 25.3 billion US dollars for Ghana, which by the end of 2021 they had acquired 3.3 billion out of the total target. According to her, the amount acquired were mostly non-traditional exports thus hoping to increase the level of traditional exports with the help of Ghanaian service and product producers.

GEPA

Established by Act 396 in 1969 as an agency of the Ministry of Trade and Industry with the mandate to develop and promote Ghanaian exports GEPA have involved Ghanaian youth in lot of exportation programmes.



Their focus has primarily been to diversify Ghana's export base from the traditional Gold and other unprocessed minerals, Cocoa Beans, Timber Logs and Lumber.

GEPA Impact Hub

In 2021, GEPA took things a step further by launching the GEPA Impact Hub, a cutting-edge, technologically advanced export trade information center designed to give the Ghanaian exporter community, institutions representing stakeholder groups in the export sector, trade and economic researchers, and the general public access to current and pertinent trade information.

The hub located at the 9th floor of the Africa Trade House is fully equipped with computers, specific online resources, printed trade publications compendiums, and a physical library where clients can sit comfortably and access information that they might otherwise find challenging to obtain.

GEPA has made available permanent presence of three key stakeholder government agencies - Ghana Standards Authority, the Food and Drugs Authority and the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture at the hub.

All services provided at the Hub are free including the gratis counseling, the limited conferencing facilities and B2B syndicated rooms for the use of SMEs.

NPA SHUTS 3 FILLING STATIONS IN SUNYANI FOR CHEATING CONSUMERS



The National Petroleum Authority (NPA) has shut three filling stations for dispensing fuel less than the quantity consumers pay for in Sunyani in the Bono Region.

The stations are; Frimps oil at Penkwase, Goil near Eusbett Hotel and Engen, all in the Sunyani township.

In the case of Frimps, all the seven dispensing units functioning at the time of the visit were underdelivering, whilst, Goil and Engen had two and four of their nozzles underdelivering respectively.

However, the NPA team observed that some of the nozzles at these filling stations were dispensing the petroleum products more than what the consumer had paid for.

The random exercise was undertaken after the team led by Kwadwo Odarno Appiah and Eunice Budu Nyarko, Bono Regional Manager and Consumer Services Manager respectively, sensitised commercial drivers and traders at the Nana Bosoma market, popularly known as Wednesday market in the Sunyani municipal area of the Bono Region.

The Bono Regional Manager emphasised

that the Authority will continue to monitor the operations of fuel stations to ensure consumers have value for money.

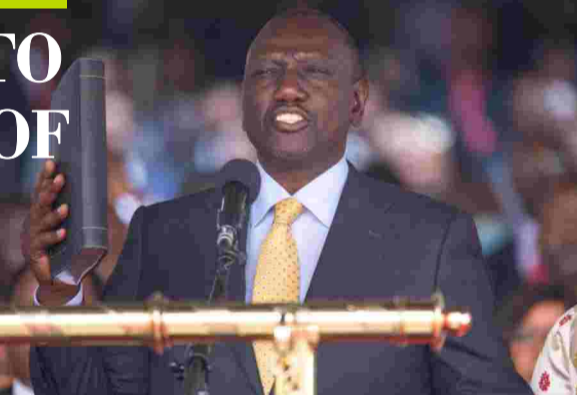
He said the defaulting fuel stations are going to be sanctioned.

"The Authority will require a report on investigations carried out by the stations as to what caused the anomalies of the nozzles", he said.

He further cautioned fuel stations to desist from the practice of using ramps and shaking of vehicles when dispensing fuel. "The NPA will not hesitate to lock temporarily, stations caught using ramps", he hinted.



WILLIAM RUTO TAKES OATH OF OFFICE AS KENYA'S 5TH PRESIDENT



William Samoei Ruto has been sworn in as the fifth president of the country, while Rigathi Gachagua was sworn in as deputy president moments after Ruto took the oath, effectively taking over from Uhuru Kenyatta who has served for two terms.

Ruto took the oath of office at a packed stadium in Kasarani witnessed by over 20 heads of state.

He was sworn in by Chief Registrar of the Judiciary Anne Amadi, in the presence of Chief Justice Martha Koome.

The 55-year-old took the oath of office on a copy of Kenya's constitution, five weeks to the day since the August 9 poll, assuming the reins of a country gripped by drought and a cost-of-living crisis.

He was declared the winner on August 15, after defeating long-time Opposition leader Raila Odinga who later petitioned the win in the Supreme Court where the case was dismissed for lack of evidence.

GHANA TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL SANITATION AUTHORITY



The German Ambassador to Ghana, Mr Jeroen Verheul, has resolve to support the Ministry of Sanitation and water Resources to establish the National Sanitation Authority.

This initiative will enable the authority to tackle sanitation and water challenges which have been the bane of national development over the years.

According to Mr Verheul in his recent statement in Accra, when he paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, Ms Cecilia Dapaah, to brief her on his outfit's position on collaborating with the ministry so far.

The discussions centred on how to speed up the processes to enable the embassy contribute its quota towards the establishment of the National Sanitation Authority (NSA).

The two also touched on ways to capitalise investments of the Upper East water supply

project aimed at improving the reliability and sustainability of water supply to Navrongo, Bolgatanga, Paga, Bongo and its surrounding communities in the Upper East Region.

Mr Verheul expressed satisfaction of the works on the phase one of the Upper East water supply which is expected to be inaugurated by the President in August this year.

He said the embassy would also do feasibility studies for the expansion of the project.

Madam Dapaah said it was important to expand water coverage to as many people as possible across the country, adding that providing water to Ghanaians had been the agenda of government stressing the "government is committed to bringing portable water to the door step of every Ghanaian."

She said government's interest had always been to partner with the private sector players to help add value to all that government is doing.

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UNESCO ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP TO ACTUALISE SDG GOALS



The Read and Earn Federation for UNESCO (UNESCO REF) has announced a new partnership with Global Learning Exchange™ (GLX), a global education solution operated by the US-based company, Sonic Foundry.

The President of UNESCO REF, Abdulsalami Ladigbolu said this in a statement to commemorate the United Nations 2022 International Youth Day, made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja recently. Ladigbolu said the partnership would operate under the umbrella of "The August Project (TAP) Project Category 2.9" and would support the actualisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education). He added that it would also support SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), putting into consideration the target goals of SDG 17 (Partnerships) in Nigeria.

"In addition to providing Nigerian students and workers with affordable access to a variety of global education and skills development programmes, the partnership with Global Learning Exchange will support the launch of multiple GLX Hub facilities in Nigeria.

"These facilities will offer Global Learning Exchange students with a positive study environment, access to technology, and a variety of academic and career development support resources.

"The establishment and construction of GLX Hubs will also bring physical infrastructure investments, create local jobs, and provide training and skills development opportunities for indigenous employees.

"In the longer term, the Global Learning Exchange programme in Nigeria will help to support our vision of cultivating a truly global workforce," he said.

Also, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Sonic Foundry, Joe Mozden, said that the partnership would facilitate connections and advance economic growth and innovation.

"The entire Global Learning Exchange team is honored by the opportunity to partner with UNESCO REF and The August Project on the development of our Nigerian programme.

"We believe that our objectives are absolutely aligned with the UN SDGs in Nigeria to provide quality education, invest and promote the development of industry and infrastructure.

"We are excited about what our team brings to the table- strong relationships with universities around the world," he said.

UN Renews Commitment to Support 2023 Elections



The United Nations, through its Peacebuilding Support Office and the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, has renewed its commitment to support Liberia's peacebuilding priorities, especially the 2023 Legislative and Presidential Elections.

The commitment was renewed when Liberia's Minister of Internal Affairs, Hon. Varney A. Sirleaf held separate engagements in New York with the Chair of the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, Ambassador Anna Karin Eneström, and Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar. The engagements were held on August 30 and September 1, 2022, respectively.

During the engagements, Minister Sirleaf stressed that full support by the United Nations and all partners to the 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections was critical for sustaining the peacebuilding gains made over the years in Liberia.

He assured that the Government of Liberia, under the leadership of His Excellency President George Manneh Weah, is committed to ensuring the enabling environment for the conduct of a peaceful, transparent, and inclusive election and has begun implementing, with support from partners, policies, and programs in this regard.

The Liberian official acknowledged the significant contributions that the United Nations, through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), have made to sustain the peace in Liberia.

In 2021, the Peacebuilding Fund approved five new projects in Liberia, two of which are supporting women's political empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence, women's leadership at the county level, and women and youth driven community early warning systems.

Minister Sirleaf described the projects as positive and welcoming, especially the ones that promote women's political empowerment, noting that "women can be good leaders and custodians of peace just as men or even more than men."

The Internal Affairs Minister then appealed for more technical and institutional support to ensure the conduct of an inclusive and peaceful election in Liberia. "To this end I am seeking support of the United Nations and Bilateral Missions for institutions related to electioneering for inclusive, free and fair elections; support to the election situation room for monitoring and responding to issues before, during and after the elections; support to early warning and response mechanisms and support to county peace committees".

Additionally, Minister Sirleaf sought technical and financial support toward addressing boundary disputes, decentralization challenges, particularly the implementation of the Local Government Act of 2018, the recently legislated Revenue Sharing Law, Cross-border peace, and issues of youth and women's empowerment, describing them as issues with potential to derail the peace in Liberia.

Responding, Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support, Ms. Elizabeth Spehar,

assured that Liberia remains a priority country and can count on the strong partnership of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Ms. Spehar also assured that the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to support the conduct of peaceful and inclusive elections in Liberia, which she described as a necessity for the consolidation of democracy and peace in Liberia.

Said Spehar: "Not only is the upcoming election a priority for the Government, but a necessity for the country... we don't want backsliding, we don't want deterioration of the situation; we want to keep going forward. We all know how peace can be fragile, it's not a linear process, you can have two steps forward and sometimes one to two steps backward, so we want to help Liberia consolidate the democracy and the peace that you are building.

The PBSO boss confirmed the mobilization of resources to provide support to some crucial peacebuilding areas, including bolstering youth and women empowerment and participation in elections, and countering hate speech and other types of incitements that could lead to electoral violence. She expressed the hope that the support will be useful contributions.

For her part, Ambassador Anna Karin Eneström, Chair of the Liberia Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Permanent Representative of Sweden, acknowledged the peacebuilding challenges mentioned by the Minister and assured of the UN's commitment of support. She emphasized that the pending election was an opportunity for Liberia to consolidate the democratic gains achieved over the years.

Ambassador Eneström disclosed that plans are underway for the conduct of a PBC Liberian Configuration meeting in October, exclusively on the 2023 elections.

She extended an invitation to the Minister of Internal Affairs to attend the meeting to further make the case and broaden the request for support to countries and institutions within and outside the UN Peacebuilding Commission. "We at the peacebuilding Commission have a focus on the upcoming elections and we are planning a meeting in October this year, exclusively on the 2023 elections in Liberia and we hope that you will attend. ... Then, of course, all the issues of the Situation Room and Early Warning Structures can be brought to the table and discussed". Ambassador Eneström told the Minister.

The engagements by Minister Sirleaf followed a recent official Peacebuilding Commission visit to Liberia by Ambassador Eneström and ASG Spehar and are a part of Minister Sirleaf's efforts to rally more support for Liberia's peacebuilding roadmap, including soliciting funding from UN and other bilateral partners towards a free, fair, transparent, and tension-free 2023 Elections, as envisaged by His Excellency Dr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia.

Minister Sirleaf was accompanied to the meetings by Ms. Cecilia Forgbre Wreh McGill, Deputy Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, and Mr. Emmanuel Wheinyue, Technical Focal Person in the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FUND APPROVES \$5.4 MILLION GRANT TO BUILD FOOD SECURITY IN SOMALIA AS MILLIONS FACE CRISIS



The Board of Directors of the African Development Fund has approved a \$5.4 million grant to support the building of urgently needed food security in Somalia.

The grant constitutes additional financing to the multinational Program to Build Resilience for Food and Nutrition Security (BREFONS) and will specifically deploy certified quality seeds of climate-adapted fodder varieties and enable the establishment of fodder banks in the six regional states of the country.

The overall objective of the BREFONS Program, which was approved in November 2021 for an amount of \$20 million, is to contribute to improving the living conditions of rural communities in the project's target areas and that of their livestock by improving their access to water, pasture, and animal health and markets. The effect of the prolonged drought and the added impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has deepened food insecurity in the country.

The additional resources will increase the project's coverage to an additional 50,000 people and 250,000 livestock, by improving access to food and pasture, respectively. The project will make use of the water mobilization infrastructures under the BREFONS Program, which includes the construction of 42 small earth dams (20,000-25,000 m3) and 23 covered community water pans. The short-term outcome will be the significant improvement of national domestic food and feed production and productivity.

"Over the years, droughts have been increasing in severity and frequency in Somalia, creating conditions of chronic vulnerability with persistent food insecurity, widespread economic hardships, conflicts, and migration, hitting the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities hardest," said Nnenna Nwabufu, Director General for the Bank's East Africa region. "The effect of the prolonged drought and added impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has deepened food insecurity in the country. Currently, more than 5 million people are facing dire food shortages."

More than 50% of last year's food aid for Somalia was expected to come from Ukraine, but the conflict has closed off shipping ports in the country. As things stand, some areas in the country are at increased risk of famine until at least September 2022 if the current Gu (rainy) season crop and livestock production fails, and food prices continue to rise sharply.

This funding falls under the African Emergency Food Production Facility, approved by the Bank's Board of Directors in May this year. The \$1.5 billion Facility aims to avert a food crisis by providing 20 million African smallholder farmers with certified seeds. It will increase access to agricultural fertilizers and enable them to produce 38 million tons of food. This would be a \$12 billion increase in food production in just two years.

312 YEARS OF HOOTING AT HUNGER: AN OVERVIEW OF TESHIE'S CELEBRATION OF THE HOMOWO FESTIVAL

BY DERRICK KAFUI



The Homowo festival is an agricultural and commemorative festival held by the Ga people of Ghana to celebrate and remember a bumper harvest that saved them from a famine centuries ago.

Celebrated in August every year, the festival also welcomes a new year since the local Ga calendar ends in August and begins anew in September. This explains the greeting, *afi-oo, afi* (Welcome, New Year), and its response, *afi aya ni eba nina wo* (May we live to witness the next year).

Many rites are performed during the Homowo festival, and though the festival has ended, correctly understanding this side of Ga history is important because it gives a broader view of the more obscure parts of Ga culture.

Given that the Ga tribes diversely celebrate Homowo, this story will focus primarily on Teshie's celebration of Homowo, explaining how and why the rites are performed.

Brief History

Teshie celebrates the Homowo festival in August, and is the last Ga township to do so. Despite being the youngest of the three major Ga townships, Teshie's celebration of Homowo is very popular due to distinct features like the *kpaafa*, which Nungua and Gamashi do not include.

A 40-minute interview with journalist and historian, Nii Adjei Klu, of Obonu Tv, excerpts from Daniel Tetteh Osabu-Kle's documentations, and interactions with residents of Teshie, revealed in-depth information about the history behind the festival, and the history of Teshie and its founding in 1710 by Nuumo (old man) Okai Nmashie, after his exodus from La during a civil war. Homowo combines *homo* (hunger), and *wo* (hoot at) into "hooting at hunger". The Ga people were nomads when they first migrated from Ile Ife in Nigeria to Ghana, they had no farms, and little livestock, but they had corn. During the famine, they sowed corn and prayed to God, whom they attribute as *Okplejen* (God everywhere), *Ataa-Naa Nyonmo* (God who is both He and She), and *Borlor* (Creator).

The Ga people traditionally believe that God's angels (*Bofoi*, *DzemaWodzi*) are his linguists, and that some of these angels live in the forests, the sea, and lagoons. In Ga culture, the pouring of libation signifies communication between man and God. Therefore, when pouring libation, God's attributes are mentioned,

as are his angels.

These angels include the sea angel, *Naaye*, who is also their leader, the forest angels, *Gbobu*, and *Gua*, and the lagoon angels, namely the *Korle*, *Osu-Klotey*, *Kpeeshi*, *Sango* and *Sakumo*. Each angel has a high priest (*wulomor*) or priestess (*woyoo*), who serves as a mediator between the Ga people and God.

Shortly after the prayers, it rained, and there was a bumper harvest. Due to severe hunger, the people prepared food, *kpokpoi*, from the unfermented corn, which they ate with palm nut soup and fish. With the famine's end came a celebration to hoot at hunger, and such was the birth of the Homowo festival. Teshie, being founded in 1710, began its celebration in that year.

Significances of the Rites of the Homowo Festival

The rites performed during the festival have various significances. In Teshie, there is not a static date for commencing the festival, the high priests decide the date using the local Ga calendar. Once the date is decided upon, the high priests cleanse the land.

The cleansing rite, named *blor hejuu*, (broom cleansing) signifies cleansing with the *ofoi blor*, which is the high priests' symbol of authority, and also signifies unity, strength, and authority. The cleansing rite is performed to wash away sins committed during the year.

The second rite of the festival *Nshor Naa Dzramo* (pacification at sea) is performed at sea on Tuesday, with an animal sacrifice. Cows were previously used, but goats are common now. For people unfamiliar with the customs of the land, this rite may resemble a sacrifice to a sea deity, but it is actually scientific in nature. The cow/goat is used as bait, and when it drowns, fishes eventually come to feed on its carcass, leading to a bumper catch when the fishermen return.

After this comes, *Nshor Bulemo*, where fishermen are tasked with sailing to the east and west to fish on Wednesday, and upon their return the next day, it would be determined which location was best for fishing based on their catch.

After the sea rites, the ban on drumming and noisemaking, *Gbe Mli Laa*, commences on the next Monday and lasts for a month. It commemorates when the Ga ancestors fasted, prayed and farmed during the famine. The ban on drumming and noisemaking, therefore, is not enforced for lesser gods to rest or sleep, as some people believe. This period also serves as a period of freedom of

speech in Teshie, where people can either be praised for good deeds, or criticized for bad ones.

Two weeks after the ban commences, on Monday, there is homecoming, *Homowo baa*, where indigenes of Teshie who travelled afar return to celebrate. *Kpokpoi* is prepared and eaten the next day, and also sprinkled at specific points of Teshie. In sprinkling *kpokpoi*, hunger is again mocked, homage is paid to ancestors who perished during the famine, and domestic animals in Teshie can also feast.

Before the ban is lifted, there is *Kpaafa*, which is among the highlights of Homowo in Teshie. Groups from the seven quarters of Teshie parade around the town, carrying flags or totems of identification, whilst singing songs that tell stories of their history, offer advice, and criticise misconducts in the country. *Kpaafa* commences on Sunday, alongside *Tsesefaa* or *Sesefaa* (carrying of sacred leaves and water in a wooden basin) and lasts a week, ending on the final Saturday of the festival.

On the evening of the last Friday of the festival, talking drums are beaten to lift the ban on drumming and noisemaking. At midnight of the final Saturday of the festival, Teshie people pilgrimage to La amidst singing, to commemorate Nuumo Okai Nmashie's exodus from La, before returning to Teshie. This is termed *Aaya Laman*. After returning, sacred branches gathered from trees at Nuumo Nmashie's residence at the town, *Okesekon*, are placed in the *Tsesee*, and paraded through the whole of Teshie.

It is believed that any misfortunes or bad luck in Teshie will spiritually be collected into the basin. The contents are then dumped at the shrine of *Ajeshimanko*, where the *Sango* lagoon in Teshie meets the sea. This is called *Tsesee Bumo*. Once the contents have been poured, the land is believed to have been cleansed for the new year. The festival then ends.

Conclusion.

While accounts of Ga origin and their cultures may differ, it is clear that there are very little documented writings on the topic due to the Ga's passing down their stories orally rather than writing them down. As such, even some Ga people are not entirely sure of the practices of their cultures or what exactly the Homowo rites stand for. It is important that this history is kept alive and documented whenever possible.

As the Ga people say, *afi-oo afi, afi aya ni eba nina wo*.

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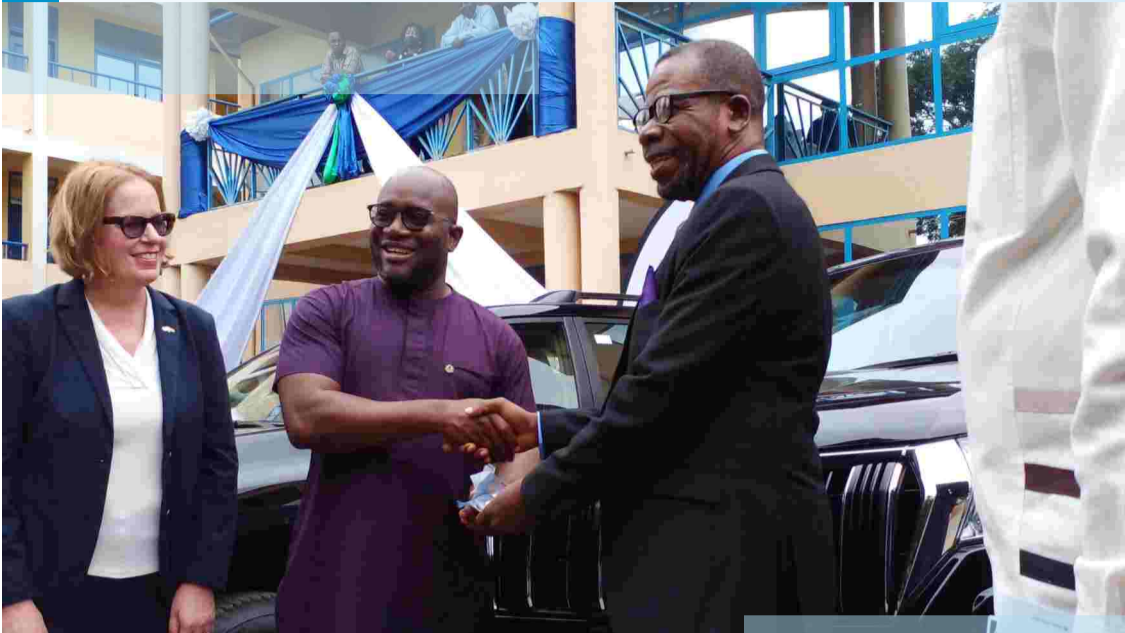
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MiDA, ENERGY COMMISSION INAUGURATE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SERVICE CENTRES



The Millennium Development Authority (MiDA), in collaboration with the Energy Commission, has inaugurated three Sustainable Energy Service Centres (SESCs) in three tertiary institutions to assist organisations to adopt and implement cost-effective energy-saving measures in their operations. The Centres were funded by the United States Government through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) at the cost of \$284,928. The SESC's have facilities such as energy audit instruments, office and information technology equipment and three vehicles for all three Centres.

Through the SESC's, the Energy Commission could build the capacity of persons in auditing, ensuring that there are core qualified and certified professionals to help undertake market assessments and to advise the government on appropriate policies to adopt in the sector.

The beneficiary institutions are the Accra Technical University, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University of Energy and Natural Resources.

The management of the three institutions received keys to the vehicles purchased to support the Centres' activities.

At the handing-over ceremony at the Accra Technical University, Mr Martin Eson-Benjamin, the Chief Executive Officer of MiDA, said the establishment of the SESC's formed part of the Ghana Power Compact Program's Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management (EEDSM) Project.

The Centres, he said, were the first of the kind in the country and would train and certify professionals who would assist Organisations and homes to adopt and implement cost-effective energy-saving measures in their operations.

"We thank the Millennium Challenge Corporation for providing the funds to make this possible. "I will also like to thank the Energy Commission for supporting MiDA to complete their pilot Centres."

The Supervising Consultant for the Project, Development Environment Services Limited (DESL) and its Partners, worked with MiDA, the Energy Commission and the beneficiary Institutions to design, equip and operationalise those Centres.

The CEO of MiDA stated that the SESC's were part of the innovative approaches to ensure the efficient use and conservation of power, and have the potential to reach out and serve entities across the country and the West African Sub-region.

He said the EEDSM Project sought to plug any gaps in the efficient use of electrical power resources. Therefore, MiDA felt it necessary to support the Energy Commission's overtures to provide resources to some selected tertiary Institutions

and equip them with the two key requirements for carrying out energy audits, he added.

In that regard, the beneficiary institutions trained staff with relevant knowledge/skills; and access to equipment to undertake measurements of power utilisation in businesses and homes, he explained.

Mr Eson-Benjamin noted that the Staff in each Centre had been given the requisite technical training on various aspects of energy management and audit through three Certification Programmes, namely, the Sustainable Energy Management Professional (SEMP), the Sustainable Energy Audit Professional (SEAP) and the Energy Audit Practicals (EAP).

He observed that energy was critical for poverty reduction and sustainable development as well as for economic growth and combating climate change.

"Adopting best practices in energy efficiency will create energy savings at the consumer and national level, and deliver these climate change benefits through avoided Climate Hazard Group (CHG) emissions in avoided electricity consumption," Mr Eson-Benjamin emphasised.

"We have put on the energy market, three willing Institutions who will collaborate with the Energy Commission to put Ghana on the pedestal; as far as ensuring the efficient use of power is concerned.

"It is MiDA's prayer that these Centres will be well-patronised by all and that the Institutions will soon become household names among our small, medium and large industries in Ghana. A successful collaboration with the Association of Ghana Industries will ensure the realisation of this goal," he stated.

Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh, the Minister of Energy, in an address read on his behalf, said the US Government had been a strategic partner to Ghana in promoting efficient energy utilisation. He stated that cost-efficient use of energy would be a catalyst for industrial development and save up to 4,000 gigawatts of power annually.

The Minister believed that the three centres would soon become centres of excellence for energy efficiency and pledged the government's commitment to roll out policy frameworks to enhance energy efficiency nationwide.

The beneficiary institutions, which were represented by Professor Elvis Asare-Bediako, Vice Chancellor of the University of Energy and Natural Resources, Sunyani, Prof. Samuel Nii Odai, Vice Chancellor of the Accra Technical University and Prof. George Yaw Obeng, Head, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), took turns to thank MiDA, MCC and Energy Commission for supporting them with the Centres and pledged to take good care of the equipment.

CAMEROONIAN WOMEN PROTEST OVER UNDERREPRESENTATION IN PEACE TALKS IN COUNTRY



In Cameroon, hundreds of women are protesting what they say is their underrepresentation in the country's efforts at peace, despite making up more than half the population. Women say they are most affected by the separatist conflict in Cameroon's western regions as well as by Boko Haram terrorism on the border with Nigeria.

In a song now referred to as their anthem, Cameroonian women ask to be given a greater opportunity to contribute to peacemaking and development.

The women chanted the song several times recently in Cameroon's capital, Yaounde, as part of activities connected to the United Nations International Day of Peace, observed on September 21.

The government says similar protests took place in the towns of Bamenda, Buea and Maroua.

Among the protesters was Muma Bih Yvonne, co-founder of the Cameroon Women's Peace Movement. Mumah says women are underrepresented in the central African state's efforts to establish peace in troubled spots.

"The major national dialogue was held. When we took statistics, the representation of women was less than 15 percent. We recommend the continuing of dialogue until we have the sustainable peace that we all dream of."

Cameroon's anglophone rebels want to create a breakaway state they call Ambazonia, separate from Cameroon's French-speaking majority. The U.N. says the rebel conflict has killed more than 3,300 people and displaced more than a half-million since fighting broke out in 2017.

Cameroon organized what was called a major national dialogue in 2019 in hopes of resolving the separatist conflict in its two English-speaking western regions.

The women say the conflict continues in part because their voices were not heard at the dialogue.

The women on Monday also launched what they call the first-ever Women's Negotiations for Peace in Cameroon.

Sonkeng Rachel, one of the organizers, says in crisis situations, women who are always considered by their communities as mothers of humanity, positive influencers and people having high moral standards, integrity and discipline should be given opportunities to speak. Sonkeng says fighters and government troops should immediately call a cease-fire before having a dialogue among themselves for sustainable peace to return to Cameroon.

Sonkeng said women will meet with both fighters and government troops to negotiate an end to the separatist crisis in Cameroon's western regions as part of the new peace initiative.

Sonkeng said women have proven that they can be the main peace negotiators because females provide humanitarian needs to affected populations, including wounded soldiers and fighters.

She said while men flee or are involved in armed battles, women educate fighters and government troops on the necessity of building peace.

The women's peace initiative is supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, a nonprofit body funded

by the German government.

The foundation's representative in Cameroon, Nina Netzer, says the more women are included in official negotiations and in peace treaties and peace accords, the likelier it is for Cameroon to have sustainable agreements.

"If any kind of continuous dialogue and negotiations are coming up, it is very important to have at least 50 percent of women negotiators because they can build bridges in between different actors, bridges in between government and non-state armed groups. Women have achieved crucial milestones."

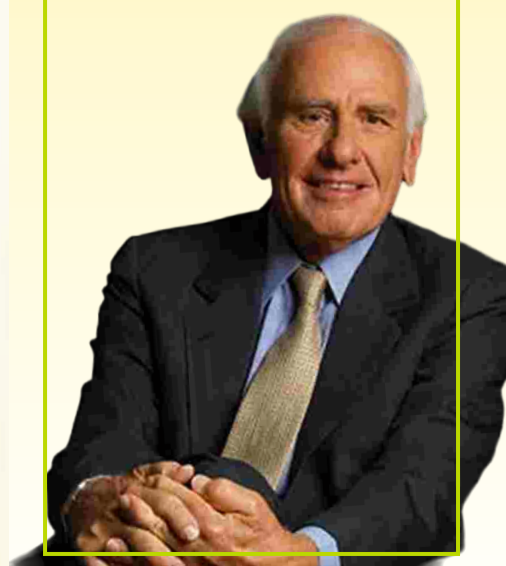
In February, the International Crisis Group reported that Cameroonian women and children have suffered disproportionately in the separatist conflict.

The conflict, which began in 2017, has claimed more than 3,300 lives and displaced over 750,000 people according to the U.N.

Meanwhile, the Boko Haram conflict, which started 13 years ago in northeast Nigeria, has killed more than 350,000 people and displaced two million across Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

The Cameroonian government says it has taken note of the women's plight but did not explain how it intends to address the issue.

"Success is nothing but more than a few simple disciplines practiced everyday"





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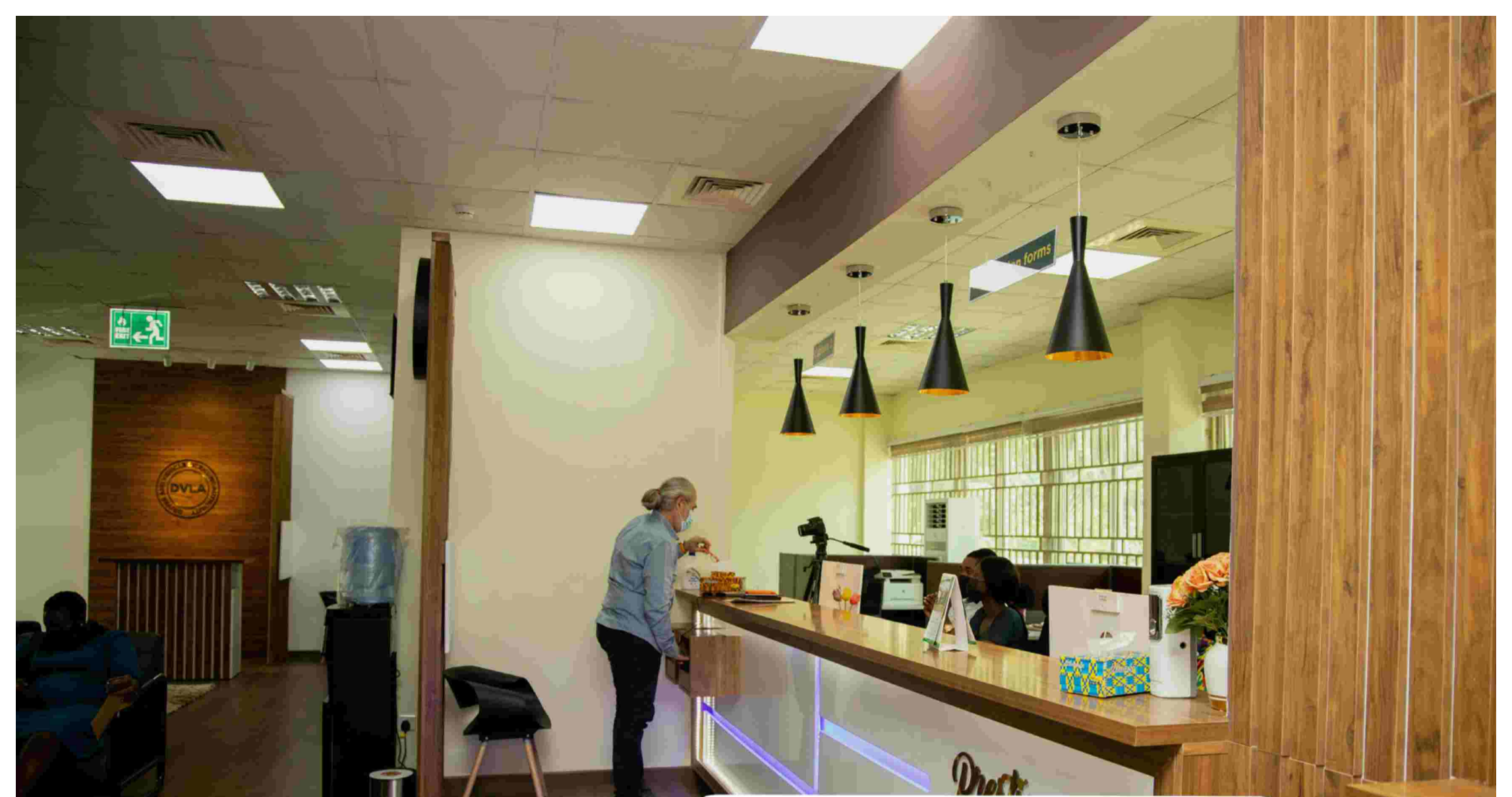
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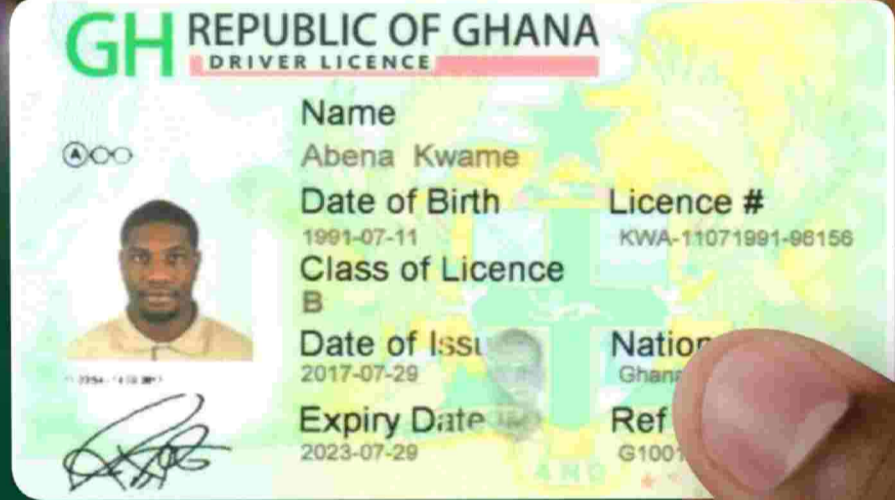
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