

JOYCE KYEREWAA AHENKORAH FROM THE UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

FULL STATEMENT/ CONTRIBUTION

The University for Development Studies (UDS) is Ghana's first public university in the northern part of Ghana. It was established by the Government of Ghana by PNDC Law 279 and published in the Gazette on May 15th, 1992. Our main focus and work is primary teaching, research, and outreach services (community service). The University has a flagship program called the third trimester field practical training program, where the University deploys approximately seven thousand (7000) students to deprived communities every year to undertake research and implement various projects and programs in their communities using local resources. I introduced the implementation of the programs and projects into this field practical training program, where students support various communities by providing portable drinking water through the repairs of broken boreholes, water treatment by providing chemicals and teaching them to harvest rainwater and treat it for household consumption, which yields massive results, such as preventing water borne diseases, water related infections and other sicknesses. In communities that were lucky to have rivers and streams, students helped them to clear weeds and stumps and embarked on afforestation programs around the water bodies to prevent them from drying up completely during the dry season. Through my innovation teaching and assessments, students are made to implement projects and programs where we embark on massive sanitation campaigns in various communities by instituting weekend cleaning exercises and distributing free dustbins in collaboration with Zoom Lion and other politicians, but the majority of the projects are self-financing by students and other interested individuals. We also educated people on open defecation, which is very rampant in this area, through proper disposal of plastic waste. We embarked on effective hand washing by using less water and educated them on judicious use of water for both household and industrial use. We have implemented various policy-related projects and programs related to water and sanitation. We educated students and staff on the appropriate use of water for flushing toilets and washing hands after using the toilet, etc.

Water for health

To achieve SDG SIX (6) and its targets, we need radical action about attitudes, change of minds, and new ways of using water, protecting water bodies, and learning how to conserve water and rainwater. Change of attitudes towards water usage, sanitation, and pollution of water bodies. These call for collective collaborations between individuals, governments, traditional leaders, politicians, community leaders, and members of communities; institutions dealing with water; and embarking on massive campaigns of afforestation around water bodies, supplying chip compounds with storage facilities and making provision for the harvest of the water and treatment methods that are cost effective. Even so, the environment where the health facility is located should be climate-friendly through afforestation.

On sanitation, the health centers the disposal of sharp objects and other waste are not properly disposed of and this intends to cause a lot of sickness, so those who get admitted, their situation will worsen, thereby leading to untimely death. This situation can be addressed by bringing all stakeholders on board, especially waste disposal organizations, water and sanitation related organizations, international bodies, communities, traditional leaders etc. We also need to build the capacities of such organizations and individuals and support them with finances. There should be sections and rewards for governments and counties that failed to comply with water laws and regulations, as well as those who were able to improve their country's water and sanitation issues.

The University for Development Studies can support with capacity building, training, workshops, monitoring, campaigns, and supporting traditional leaders, communities, and those concerned about these issues and can help to build the capacities of water and sanitation related institutions. I am committed to leading this action.

As a lecturer in this area of the country, I am committed with the support of my institution to starting a serious campaign to educate communities on the importance of rain harvesting and supporting them with storage tanks and treatment methods for rainwater use during the dry season and embarking on massive afforestation to combat climate change. If we are, we can also monitor and document progress since we have a whole faculty for sustainable development. Also, we can form groups on a regional basis so that we collaborate and work together and learn from each other.

I am also committed to embarking on massive environmental sanitation by putting proper strategies in place by supporting communities to cultivate the habit of cleaning and proper disposal of waste by distributing dustbins and supervising the collection of waste and cleaning in collaboration with waste management teams, chiefs, opinion leaders, and the necessary stakeholders, and recycling of plastic waste to provide for livelihood security. We can bring on board students I taught as interns to help accomplish this task. We implemented a similar action during the COVID-19 era and it worked perfectly.

Water for climate, resilience and the environment.

Here too, we need to take radical action without compromising on anything, including actions and steps to take. We have to embark on a serious afforestation program everywhere to protect water bodies through afforestation. We need to impose sanctions on bush burning and even turn these weeds into economic activities by using the grass to produce paper bags, traditional mats, etc. So a professor at my university and a mentor have started producing paper bags from grass that they burn in the northern part of Ghana, so we can support this initiative by financing and linkage to markets as well as technological support. It will give livelihood security to people by harvesting the grasses they burn for income, which will definitely give employment and livelihood to unemployed youth and women. In my Planning and Policy course, I engage my students in this topic. A group of students chose afforestation as their practical project and planted royal trees along the road of the university, and the university has also embarked on an afforestation program on the campus, which is really helping all of us. **My University can lead this**

agenda, by given adequate support in capacity building, training, education, monitoring, documentation, etc, and all stakeholders must come on board support.

COOPERATION WITH WATER

The same radical action is needed for us to implement in order to accomplish this goal. Border countries should be able to demarcate boundaries and share water resources belonging to those countries equitably without creating any tensions that can spark war and conflict. Here there is a need to see how we can store and put to good use spillage water from dams of border countries, which always causes destruction instead of resources. Water spillage always destroys lives and properties, especially between Burkina Faso and Ghana. This initiative can contribute to achieving the SDG (six 6) and its targets as well as serve as a resource that will promote agriculture, food security, employment, etc.

The University can support this by linking institutions with partners from other countries who have the technology to assist, provide training, build capacities in monitoring and evaluation, research and documentation. We need to bring all stakeholders on board, including the UN, governments, financial institutions, academics, communities always affected, traditional leaders and all those who matter most in this action.

Water Action Decade

The same approach is needed to accomplish this action

Also, the West Africa center for irrigation and sustainable agriculture at the university embarks on the following projects and programs:

Water resources management; irrigation and drainage systems; sustainable agriculture; climate change; food and nutrition security. They have different kinds of training and workshops in sustainable agriculture and climate change adaptation. Constructed solar panel irrigation, trained masters' students, PhDs, and postdoctoral research, etc.

The university blends the academic world with that of the community in order to provide constructive interaction between the two for the total development of northern Ghana in particular and the country as a whole. The pedagogical philosophy of UDS is said to have been borne out of a new thinking in higher education emphasizing the need for universities as teaching and research institutions to play a more active role in addressing societal problems (especially in rural areas) for speedy development.

The University, by its mandate and constituency, has a pro-poor focus and this is reflected in its methodology of teaching, research and outreach services. The specific emphasis on practically-oriented research and field-based training is aimed at contributing towards poverty reduction in order to accelerate national development.

