



ECOYOUTH Africa 2011 Conference Brief

Held from the 7-14 August 2011

@ Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana



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Acknowledgement

Green WaterHut, Nature Today Group and Active Business Solutions wish to express sincere gratitude to the timely support of all partners during this conference. We wish to say that without the kind gesture from *Participatory Development Associates, Arocha International, Trobenbos International* and K-Fm, it would have been hard to successfully organize this noble conference.

Summary

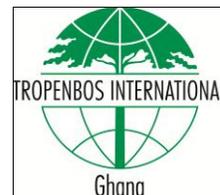
Today we are challenged by various environmental hazards which in many times result in the huge loss of precious lives and property. In addition to this, natural and environmental resources are becoming scarce. These challenges call for new paradigm thinking especially in Africa where it is predicted by various scientific reports, the impacts of climate change will be felt worse in this continent than any other. Part of the logic behind this scientific finding is the lack of adequate knowledge in preparedness towards natural hazards, scarcity and effects of climate change. In order to contribute towards an awareness and empowerment of the people in Africa regarding these challenges, Ecoyouth Africa Initiative (EYI) was born in 2010 to rethink, plan and create innovative strategies of bridging a balance between environmental hazards and survival. The original concept was developed by Green WaterHut (GWH) and Nature Today Group (NTG) which are both researched-based NGOs working in the areas of water conservation and general sustainable living. Active Business Solutions joined the team from GWH and NT to ensure that a consolidated foundation for championing the dream of an educated average African on knowing, learning and sharing adaptive mechanisms towards climate change effects were established. The organizers realized the impact of the youth to bring a change to Africa, and to turn the misfortunes of Africa into real new joy and opportunities.

In view of this, the EYI initiated the first ever Ecoyouth Africa 2011 Conference which was hosted by the renowned scientific university of Ghana – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The conference brought together 16 talented youth from Ghana and Senegal. It must be mentioned that, several other international participants from Egypt, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Liberia intended to attend the conference. Unfortunately, they had to turn down their turn-up due to inability to secure flight costs. Notwithstanding, all participants both participated and online registered were

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Mr Agana. He has also promised in advance to design more art-work for special T-shirts promised to be used in the EYA 2014 conference. To allow our participants to have a practical feel of what they learnt at the conference, day 3 before the departure; participants undertook a tour to the Barekesi Water Treatment Plant. This is the main plant for supplying potable water to the Kumasi metropolis.

The conference ended successfully with participants being urged to go and become the first ambassadors of EYA and fight against climate change impacts in their various countries. As organizers, we felt very encourage and happy at the end of the conference the sacrificial support from our wonderful sponsors – PDA, Tropenbos, Arocha Ghana and K-fm Studio. Without them, it was going to be very impossible to organize this event according to plan. To our zealous participants, we are forever indebted to you for making the first ever EYA 2011 conference a success. It is from you, we are sure that, there is a hope for tomorrow, and there is a hope for Africa; that together as one-youth, we can transform the misfortunes of Africa into opportunities.

Day 1: SCARCITY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE “BLUE GOLD”



Mr. **Antwi Boasiako Baffour** of **AROCHA Ghana** gave the first presentation of the day on the topic, **SCARCITY AND MANAGEMENT OF THE “BLUE GOLD”**. In his presentation, he reiterated the importance of water as a resource, the current global water situation and lastly outlined how water resources can be managed efficiently to ensure it does not become exhausted in our planet. He further emphasized the role of the participants in seeing themselves as the changing force to ensure that proper use, control and management of water was enforced to enable the availability of water for all. Other issues touched on were the alarming rate of pollution that is causing the blue-gold to become increasing scarce. Participants were warned that if no care or attention was put in place, the blue-gold could cease to provide the needed role in society. Participants had many questions because this topic was very touching for all, however for lack of time,

questions were minimized and participants who had other questions were recommended to meet the presenter after the discussion.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

On this same day, participants had a chance to hear from the PDA expert on Climate Change and Mitigation – Mr George Ahiale. He had an interesting way of introducing his presentation. He first taught the participants a song on Climate Change which excited all participants to sing together and dance. It was such a wonderful

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introduction. He then proceeded to teach participants on the dangers, forecasts and the possible impacts of climate change on our societies. Most participants were amazed at what he presented and began to understand some of the challenging situations currently faced in the country such as drought, erratic rainfall etc. Participants truly enjoyed this inspired lecture from Mr Ahiale of PDA, Ghana.

Day 2 - Training On Effective Dialogue, Communication and Presentation Skills

The second day first presentation was given by the Programme Assistant from Tropenbos International. He explained to participants the relevance and the necessity for participants to communicate freely with each other. Participants were taught some of the basic skills that were necessary on unlocking communication gaps and resolution of dialogue conflicts. To him, this topic was especially important for Africa, especially that the cultural diversity and language barriers sometimes make it difficult for us as a continent to understand each other properly. With these skills, participants were elevated to ensure that they practice the ethics of good communication not only for issues relating to climate change impacts, water and environmental resources management but in their daily living.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In order to ensure that, participants understand the opportunities that are existing in their respective countries, an experienced business consultant of Lifeline Investment Ltd was invited on the talk on Entrepreneurship and Career Development. It was such an interesting moment because participants had many questions about how best they could use their talents into business opportunities. It was the long presentation and open discussion with the participants. Unfortunately, this presentation was cut short after lasting more than 1.30hrs. This is because the zealous participants at the conference had personal proposals and individually wanted to know the possible ways of changing these into business realities. They were advised to contact the presenter after this presentation for further discussion.

Day 3. Youth in Action

On this day, participants were grouped into groups according to their thematic choice: (1) Climate Change, (2) Water Resources, (3) Conflict and Violence in Natural Resources use and Management. This session was moderated by Mr. Kamil Salam of PDA and Ms. Esther Yirbom, of EYA. The main of these thematic groups was to insight participants to develop proposals and implement some specific programs in their respective countries. Participants from Senegal mentioned that, they were already embarking some youth awareness program on climate change. They promised to report on this in the next EYA conference. All other participants promised to implement some activities in their towns and cities, and report this at the next conference also.

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TRIP TO BAREKESE WATER TREATMENT PLANT

This trip was led by the Mr. Antwi Boasiako Baffour, **A ROCHA GHANA**. The object of the trip was to expose the participants to some the struggles in treating water before it gets to the households. They were led to the reservoir and various important sections of the plant. Participants asked questions in cases, they did not understand the complex technicalities behind the plant. In all, participants realized the heavy amount of money government waste every month due to heavy pollution of water bodies in the Kumasi metropolis and neighboring towns.



Positives

- Empowered youth for action on climate change discussion
- Ecoyouth Conference foundation fully established
- Supporting organizations commitment for long-term on EYA programmes
- Youth commitment to initiate water and environmental based programs in their respective towns and cities
- Youth learnt new ways of improving their entrepreneurial skills, communication skills and self-reliance abilities

Setbacks

As with all starting programs, there are bound to be lapses and difficulties. The main challenges faced were:

- Lack of full financial sponsorship limited full conference programme implementation
 - Lack of partial/full support for foreign participants to make international flights to Ghana
 - Lack of a professional interpreter or electronic translating devices for the Senegalese participants. They however, had informal translating from some participants who were fluent in English and French.
- We are however optimistic that, the upcoming EYA 2014 will be a difference with some of these challenges mentioned here, all resolved.

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- Green WaterHut, Ghana
- Nature Today, Ghana
- Active Business Solutions, Ghana
- Participatory Development Associates, Ghana
- Arocha International, Ghana
- Trobenbos International, Ghana Chapter
- K-Fm

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