The Ghana Environmental Concern Meter

Contributions of Public Opinions in the Search for Environmental Justice for Ghanaian Communities

1.0 Introduction

The environment is very important in all spheres of human life. It regulates our activities, provides us with basic needs and supports our human existence. In addition, the environment forms the underlying cultural values which we dearly cherish. The state and management of the environment have both direct (beautification of communities, good smell, comfortable living, flood, poor sanitation, and vegetation lost, etc.) and indirect (improved tourism and economic activities, agricultural yield, climate change etc.) effects on the individuals and their activities.

There is no gainsaying the fact that, Ghana as a country faces many and diverse environmental challenges which many a times affect government and public policy focus, resulting in reactive responses to these glitches. These reactive responses to environmental challenges have over the years proved not to be adequate enough to match the challenges they are to battle. For instance, despite numerous promises and some attempts by the Ghanaian government and stakeholders to see an end to poor urban sanitation in the country, indiscriminate public littering, plastic waste generation and drainage spilt are no near to even stability, these problems continue to escalate in many urban centres which negatively affect the lives of many people, especially the urban poor communities. Given an example, at the end of the first-half of the year 2015 alone, Ghana recorded 636 cases of cholera, the majority of which recorded in urban poor communities. Also, illegal mining, river body contamination, and deforestation continue to grip and devastate many rural communities making lives unbearable for this local people.

The Ghanaian Environmental Concern Meter is a scientific and objective assessment of public concerns on various environmental issues and challenges which affect the lives of the Ghanaian citizen. It is also a detective and reporting tool for new, developing, and hidden environmental problems in this direction. In furtherance, it sorts to open these accelerating glitches in our environment to the arena of public knowledge to encourage self-help responsibility and environmental ownership among the Ghanaian people.
The central focuses of the Ghanaian Environmental Concern Meter are to:

- Aggregate public concerns about the environment and its related challenges
- Identify effective methods to harness community and individual efforts to promote environmental welfare, which in the end will promote quality of life in people.
- Point out hidden and developing environmental challenges to engender proactive measures to mitigate them.
- Inform and guide public environmental policies by the state and other non-state actors in their actions to promote environmental welfare.
- Accumulate and provide reliable environmental data source to needed and appropriate institution and individuals

1.1 Relevance and Outcomes of the Project

The importance of public opinion in the arena of environmental welfare often gets too little attention, especially in developing countries. This has been so because public opinion in itself has not found fully-fledged medium that would aggregate vast opinions to obtain intelligence which will bring to bare its usefulness in an attempt to promote environmental welfare. This calls for accessible and proper channels to manage public opinions toward deriving optimum impact, and presents, at present, a big room for positive change and we are of the believe that we can harness our efforts toward the light of a healthy and congenial environment through the aggregation of public voices.

Taking from the Ghanaian context, which may not be different from the situation in many other developing countries, the issue of environmental welfare at both national and local levels receives insufficient contribution from and inclusion of public concerns in environmental re-engineering, this has partly, due to incommensurate avenues for people to vent their opinions. It is also due to the exclusion of the public from environmental decision making which has grown to develop two main scenarios;

a) An environmentally indifferent citizen

b) An environmentally unaccountable politician.
In the first scenario, citizens seem not to care much about the environment because they think they have no noticeable role to play in evolving a good environment. In the second scenario, the politician considers it fortunate to have had a ‘free playing field’ and hence goes to sleep without burden. It is no surprise that issues of environmental welfare have always been marginalized even in political manifestos and on campaign grounds, and in the end, the most vulnerable to this predicament becomes the ordinary citizen who has little or no self-defense against their negative consequences.

The Ghanaian Environmental Concern Meter which will be released on annual basis, starting from the year 2016 by the Centre for Environmental Research and Policy Analysis (CERPA). Its purpose is to influence and improve public interest in environmental policy decisions in Ghana. It will provide empirical base evidence for both state institutions and other stakeholders within the environmental policy arena. Again, it will help to provide reliable data records for effective decision making. The issue of data reliability has long been a problem in Ghana and has been blamed for many policy failures in the country. Accessibility of reliable data to inform policy formulation and implementation has also been a challenge for local and international private agencies which endeavor to assist in solving local environmental challenges. It is against this backdrop that this study aims to create continues database and make it available to relevant institutions and agencies as well as individuals when needed. To achieve these objectives, findings and their corresponding recommendations from this study will be presented to concerned Ministries and Government Agencies and also to other stakeholders. CERPA will collaborate with various media houses to have the results published to make it easily accessible by the public and decision makers. Again, CERPA will continuously publish the findings on its website: www.cerpagh.com and on the web pages of our partners.

2.0 Methodology

The Ghanaian environmental concern meter samples opinions of Ghanaians under appropriate scientific methods. The assessment will apply surveys and in-depth interviews in soliciting views from sampled respondents. The solicited responses will critically be analyzed using statistical applications and emerging themes. The results will be reviewed by experienced researchers and experts in environmental protection/studies before they are made public.
2.1 Research Design

This project will employ quantitative approaches in obtaining relevant data from the general public for analysis and reporting. Taking into account, the purpose of the project, CERPA considers quantitative approaches to be the appropriate method to enable us to solicit views from a representative proportion of the Ghanaian population within a practical timeframe with reasonable resources. In addition, this approach will make it possible to generalize findings from the study on the bases that a representative proportion of the public will be sampled for the project. This notwithstanding, they study will select some individual from key state and non-state institutions for in-depth interviews.

2.1.1 Population, Sampling and Instruments

The purpose of this project is to aggregate public opinion on the environment and gives voice to the Ghanaian public in taking pubic decisions on the environment; hence the general public of Ghana is the target population for this study. In addition, common environmental problems which affect the citizen are known to be interrelated and have rippled effects. For example, acute rural environmental challenges such as river body contaminations and forest and farmland degradation have forced many local people into urban slams where sanitation has become a crip of good life. Hence, to address environmental challenges which affect urban poor communities also means to look beyond the boundaries of these communities and tackling the root causes from other areas.

In view of this, a sample of 1500 to 2000 people will randomly be selected from all the 10 regions of Ghana to engage in this project as respondents. In selecting respondents regions for the study, CERPA will take into consideration among other things to include region’s population, specific environmental problems, and gender.

Standardized survey questions, predominately close-ended in nature will be presented to respondents to respond to. The questions on the questionnaires will focus at finding answers to address the specific research objectives of this study and will be administered by trained data collectors and filed enumerators. Respondents will be guided to give responses to this question by the trained data collectors. Also, mailing and self-administered methods will be used to solicit views from institutions elites in these communities.
4.1.2 Validation of Questionnaire

With the use of newly developed questionnaire for this study, CERPA sees the need to scientifically validate all questions on the questionnaire to ensure that they are in line with the objectives they are meant to find answers to. The first step into the validation process is to have expert face review. By this, the questionnaire will be presented to separate researchers of high knowledge in quantitative instrument development and also in environmental concern issues. The expert’s recommendations (if any) will be a guide to adjust the questionnaire to have it improved. Second, the study will employ field piloting, to finalize the validation of the questionnaire. A subset of the intended sample for this study will be independently selected to respondent to the questionnaire, after which Cronbach’s Alpha reliability and Principal Component analysis test will be performed to establish the validity of the questions on the questionnaire.

2.2 Analysis of Data and Reporting

Responses obtained from the field will be captured into a suitable computerized format for analysis. The analysis will focus on generating simple frequency and percentages to be presented in tables and charts. This will make their understanding easier for both policy makers and the general public. In addition, inferential statistical analysis will be performed to help establish relationship among variables and also help form the bases for the project’s recommendations.

3.0 Team

CERPA has put together a team of experienced and professional researcher with high interest in finding solutions to society’s environmental challenges. With their commitment and professional contributions, this project is expected to be beneficial to the Ghanaian and international community at large. In addition to the core team outlined here, CERPA will continuously make use of professional advice and contributions from external sources (the Environmental Protection Agency -Ghana, university professors, and other professional researchers in the field of
environmental protection) for the ultimate interest of this project. The core team members for this project are as follows:

**Dr. Efua Esaaba Mantey:** Lecturer, Department of Social Work, University of Ghana.

She has her specialties in Disability Issues, Family and Child Welfare, Social Protection and has served as consultant for many local and national institutions including social welfare department of Ghana. Since March 2015, she has been part of CERPA as a senior research advisor.

**Mr. Ronny Agyei Yeboah:** CEO; CERPA, Student; M.Sc. Environmental Governance, University of Freiburg, Germany.

He is currently a volunteer for the 5th International Convention of Environmental Laureates 2016 by the European Environment Foundation. Over the years he has led and participated in many project development and implementations, most of which are environmentally focused. In 2014, he served as a leading field officer for Health and Environmental Protection survey for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in five deprived mining communities in the Amansie West District –Ashante Region of Ghana. Between September 2012 and August 2013, he served as a Research Assistant at the University of Ghana’s Department of Political Science which enabled him to take part in many environmental and societal policy research and analysis. He also served as Head of Research, and Data Analyst, respectively at Research Blog Consultancy and Dalmort Consulting Limited which he participated in different environmental protection researches. While at Research Blog Consultancy he let his team to carry out a successful study “Effect of Sanitation on Economic Activities” for Tema Municipal Assembly -Ghana in 2014. He is skilled in quantitative and qualitative research and specialized in complex quantitative data analysis with the use of SPSS, STATA, and GIS.

**Mr. Twum Kojo Kakra:** Graduate Research Assistant, University of Ghana Business School.

He is currently a Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Ghana Business School. Prior to his current appointment, Twum Kojo Kakra had volunteered for the Environmental Protection Agency in 2013 and the Centre Environmental Protection and Natural Resource 2011. He also worked with the National Disaster Management Organisation from 2010-2011.
Ms. Afia Nyama Danso: MPhil Development Studies, Junior Research Fellow, Centre for Environmental Research and Policy Analysis (CERPA). Prior to joining CERPA, Ms. Danso functioned as research assistant at the Dept. of Political Science of the University of Ghana. She also worked as project coordinator for Research Blog Consultancy.

Mr. Philip Sackey: Head of Operations, Centre for Environmental Research and Policy Analysis (CERPA). He holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Political Science and Geography from the University of Ghana.

Proposed Questions

1. How concerned are you about environmental issues in your community?  a) Extremely Concern [ ] b) Concern [ ] c) Somehow Concern [ ] d) Not Concern [ ]

2. Which among these environmental challenges do you consider to be most threatening in the Ghanaian society?  a) Poor Sanitation [ ] b) Forest Degradation [ ] c) Land Degradation [ ] d) Water/River Pollution [ ] e) Other (please specify it)

3. Which among these environmental challenges affects you directly or being common in your own community?  a) Poor Sanitation [ ] b) Forest Degradation [ ] c) Land Degradation [ ] d) Water/River Pollution [ ] e) Other (please specify it)

4. Please outline any environmental challenge(s) which affects your community but has not been mentioned in the above questions filth.

..................................................................................................................................................
5. How often do you hear about environmental awareness campaign?  
   a) Very Often [ ]  
   b) sometimes [ ]  
   c) rarely [ ]  
   d) Not at all [ ]

6. Do you think Ghana as a country is doing enough to protect her environment for today and future generations?  
   a) Yes [ ]  
   b) No [ ]

7. Suggest any possible way(s) by which your affected environmental challenges can be solve. .................................................................

8. Gender.  
   a) Male [ ]  
   b) Female

9. Age Range  
   a) Less than 20 years [ ]  
   b) 20-29 years [ ]  
   c) 30-39 years [ ]  
   d) 40-49 years [ ]  
   e) 50 years and above

10. In which region do you live?  
    a) Ashanti [ ]  
    b) Brong Ahafo [ ]  
    c) Central  
    d) Eastern [ ]  
    e) Greater Accra [ ]  
    f) Northern n [ ]  
    g) Upper East [ ]  
    h) Upper West [ ]  
    i) Volta [ ]  
    j) Western [ ]