
THE REGION NETWORK EXPERIENCE — PRESENTATION ON THE GHANA EPA EXPERIENCE

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SUMMARY

The Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is one of the oldest environmental agencies in Africa, having been established just after the Stockholm Conference in 1972. The agency created an Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network comprising the security and regulatory agencies to assist with compliance and enforcement issues. EPA has assisted a number of sister African countries to establish environmental management programmes, especially in the areas of national environmental action plan development, environmental impact assessment (EIA), environmental information system and environmental quality monitoring.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)(hereinafter “the Agency”) is one of the oldest environmental agencies in Africa. It was established in September 1974 shortly after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, Stockholm, Sweden as the Environmental Protection Council (EPC). It was initially an advisory and coordinating body, which brought for the first time under one body environmental matters.

As environmental issues gained prominence in national development, calls were made for the strengthening of the EPC and the granting of powers to enforce environmental practices. This led to the transformation of the EPC into the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December 1994 under Act 490, 1994. It maintained its original functions of advising, coordination, collaboration, cooperation and awareness creation.

In addition, it was given regulatory functions of issuing environmental permits

and pollution abatement notices, prescribe standards and guidelines relating to the pollution of air, water, land and other forms of pollution including the discharge of waste and the control of toxic substance among others.

Under its mandate the EPA enforces environmental requirements through issue of notice in writing to request for environmental impact assessment containing such information specified; issue enforcement notice when activities poses threat to the environment or public health to prevent or stop the activities; and an offence is committed when the enforcement notice is not complied with and liable to summary conviction to a fine and term of imprisonment.

The responsible Minister irrespective of the above actions can also take such steps, as he considers appropriate to ensure compliance with the notice. Initially enforcement through prosecution was undertaken through the Attorney General’s Department but action was slow. As a result recommendations were made and with the support of Parliament, the Attorney

General's Department delegated the powers to the Agency to prosecute cases.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT NETWORK

The Agency created an Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network comprising the security and regulatory agencies to assist with compliance and enforcement issues. Environmental Inspectors appointed under the Act were trained by the Attorney General's Department in prosecution procedures. The inspectors with the Agency's lawyers ensure compliance and enforcement. An agreement has been reached with the Ghana Police Service to train police officers in environmental management. In addition four Police Officers in each of the ten divisional commands would assist with environmental crimes, investigations and prosecution.

3 TRAINING ASSISTANCE

As a pioneer environmental agency in Africa, the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency has assisted a number of sister African countries to establish environmental management programmes, especially in the areas of national environmental action plan development, environmental impact assessment (EIA), environmental information system and environmental quality monitoring. We have received delegations from these countries:

- Environmental quality monitoring and general environmental management - Gambia, Benin
- National Environmental Action Plan – Zambia, Malawi, Namibia

- EIA – Tanzania, Benin
- Environmental Audit – Uganda
- Environmental Quality Monitoring (Air) - Benin

There are plans to train environmental officers from Mozambique. Ghana also hosts the secretariat for Capacity Development and Linkages for Environmental Impact Assessment in Africa (CLEIAA), which aims at promoting the development of EIA capacity in African countries.

Due to its long period of existence (nearly 30 years), the Agency established a training school with plans for multilingual translation facilities to offer training in environmental management for national stakeholders and also officers of sister African countries.

These experiences are beneficial to these countries as we share similar historical and development experience. Sharing and exchanging these experiences with others would ensure cost-effective programmes and avoid duplication and re-inventing the wheel. They would also strengthen links and cooperation among African countries.

4 CONCLUSION

The African region at moment does not have a functioning Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (ECE) Network but I believe that the experience of Ghana with other countries can be built upon to establish a functioning African ECE Network.