

IAIA-Ghana

End of Year Dinner and Hand Over Ceremony

Keynote Address by Yaw Amoyaw-Osei (Out-Going President)

Impact Assessment and its Relevance to National Development

1.0 Impact Assessment and IAIA

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) is the global body and network of experts and professionals in Impact Assessment (IA) or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Membership of IAIA is from International Financial Institutions and banks (e.g. World Bank, African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, etc.), Academia (University professors, research institutions, etc.); Government Departments; Consultants; NGOs, Private sector and Industry and students. The local Affiliate of IAIA – the IAIA-Ghana also draws its membership from similar constituents as the mother Association.

Almost every international institution and country of the world have their IA system to influence development financing and or project implementation. Ghana has been a leader in IA since the 1990s, with a functional and effective IA system, backed by an appropriate legal framework.

IA in simple terms means, do not start a project when you don't know or understand the scope and nature of social, cultural, socio-economic, health and ecological cost and implications, because the costs and implications could far outweigh the project benefits with other unanticipated regrettable repercussions.

The IA requirements ensure that any intended development or investment action or policy or plan or programme is subject to thorough analysis to understand the potential implications for the social, economic and resources of any group of people likely to be affected, and the environment, so that the necessary safeguards (or mitigation measures) could be introduced (or implemented) to make the project socially acceptable and environmentally sound and sustainable.

IA is a preventive tool that has moderated almost all major projects and investments in Ghana, such that projects that are problematic, by virtue of design, technology, resource demand or poor siting do not live to be implemented; and therefore we are all spared the otherwise ugly side of such developments. Whenever we have failed to allow IA to work effectively on projects or policies, we have ourselves to blame, and only live to regret it later. Two obvious, recent examples are the:

- Gas explosion and related fatalities (Atomic Junction) from wrong siting of LPG plants; and
- Medina-Adenta highway fatalities from unavailable footbridge for pedestrian crossing.

2.0 Medina-Adenta Highway fatalities

It is for instance, unthinkable that with Ghana's advancement in IA, we should record any fatality at all, let alone so many on the Medina-Adenta Highway project, because of unconstructed or uncompleted footbridges. IA would require that mitigation provision such as footbridges or safe road crossings would be constructed first before the actual road works. This is because people need to continue to cross the road, as they did prior to the project. The footbridges or safe road crossings, in this case, are not a favour done the people in the area, but a necessary project mitigation that forms an integral part of the project costing.

3.0 Shelved Government Projects and Policies

Great government policies and initiatives that have been shelved or delayed, could just be because the required regulatory or institutional procedures to ensure social acceptability are or have not been followed, e.g.:

- The vehicle towing policy;
- Cylinder re-circulation model;
- Use of drones in healthcare/medical delivery system; and perhaps the
- National Cathedral project.

The required procedures as enshrined in our laws is the Impact Assessment Regulations (LI 1652), which unfortunately are often either ignored or inadvertently overlooked or ineffectively performed, especially for government funded projects.

4.0 Campaign against Galamsey

Our Association, IAIA-Ghana was actively involved in the campaign against Galamsey. Research work by our experts on water and pollution, etc. provided the requisite scientific basis supporting the campaign against illegal mining, mounted by with the Media Coalition Against Galamsey, which IAIA-Ghana and CSIR Water Research Institute joined forces with. That collaboration needs to be deepened.

We highly commend the Government for this singular most significant act of protection of the environment – an action that can compete for the national environmental achievement of the decade.

We are however, under no illusion that the battle is over, though the ban on SSM has been lifted. Galamsey is so deeply rooted, ubiquitous and woven into the very fabric of society, that its vestiges could not be easily eradicated without a sustained strategic action.

5.0 Refined Mining Policy

The challenges with mining and related environmental and resource degradation are not limited only to Galamsey, but with inappropriate and abuse of SSM licenses, prospecting licenses exploited for actual mining, haphazard sand winning and laterite over exploitation.

Ghana needs a refined Mining Policy fashioned out of a Strategic IA for responsiveness to the current challenges in the sector, and also for sustainable mineral resource development and the environment. Such a policy would correct the numerous past errors and institutional ineptitudes. It would make illegal mining very unattractive and costly to venture into; and would also become a vehicle for sustainability related resource utilization and the transformation of mining communities.

For instance, what have we to show for the decades of mining in mineral-rich communities such as Obuasi, Tarkwa and Prestea? A Strategic IA influenced refined Mining Policy could begin to change the story. If we are unable to take advantage of the unique goodwill and resolve of the President (to bring sanity in the sector), to achieve such a refined Mining Policy and consequent reformulation of mineral and mining regulations, would be a miserable lost opportunity.

6.0 Development of Petroleum Resources in the Voltain Basin

Presently, most of the waterbodies in Ghana are grossly polluted due to illegal mining activities, disposal of domestic and untreated waste, and the Volta Basin remains the last bastion of relatively clean water in Ghana. IA process for the exploitation of oil needs to be very thorough, likewise the Keta Basin.

The Keta coastline is already unstable, so inshore drilling of oil may destabilize it further. Farming could be affected as there is the fear that underground water would be polluted. Fishing could be affected and this is the mainstay of the people in the area. On the whole, people's livelihood could be under threat. We urge that a thorough IA be undertaken to establish the conditions under which exploration of oil in the Voltain Basin could be carried out without serious future regrets.

7.0 Bauxite development in the Atewa Mountains

How do we exploit our Bauxite reserves to enhance our economic prospects, without compromising the natural resources (water and biodiversity) and other environmental or ecological services of the Atiwa forest? How do we ensure/achieve sustainable Bauxite exploitation, if at all the reserves must be exploited - whether in full or part or not at all for a given period, and by what methodology? These are the questions and issues IA would systematically address.

8.0 Big Environmental Consultancies and Capital Flight

Capital flight in the area of big environmental consultancies that go to foreign firms at the detriment of local IA professionals is huge worry in our national development. Ghana has only a matured IA system backed by functional regulations, but also a crop of high caliber professional in IA of international repute (numbering over 100). Our professionals, such as members of IAIA-Ghana are often treated as secondary-grade consultants, only good enough for sub-contracts from international firms, but our people end up performing the full consultancy assignments for these foreign firms, with peanut compensation. Our local content laws must protect our interest, in order to avoid such unnecessary capital flight from our country.

On this note however, we wish to encourage our members to come together to form consortiums and other strong consultancy firms, rather than as small firms or working as one-man consulting firm. We will also need to promote refresher training for our members to enhance their professionalism and competitiveness.

9.0 National Environmental Council

The Government has established two important councils – the Fiscal Council and the Financial Stability Council, which are highly commendable initiatives towards consolidation of Ghana's financial management. We call for the establishment of an equally important council – A National Environmental Council or Environmental Governance Council to advise the President on natural resource, sanitation and environment and related developmental issues for the promotion of sound environmental governance in Ghana.

For instance, an Environmental Council would be expected to competently advice the President on procedures and considerations into the :

- Mineral development (Bauxite) in the Atewa Mountains;
- Petroleum development in the Voltain basin in Ghana; and
- Exploitation of other natural resources such as water, forest, minerals, etc.

Thank You