



YOUTH
LEGACY
GHANA



GHANA WETLANDS SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE 2021

Event Report For the First Edition of The Ghana
Wetlands Sustainability Conference



GHANA WETLANDS
SUSTAINABILITY
CONFERENCE

REPORT OF THE GHANA
WETLANDS SUSTAINABILITY
CONFERENCE 2021

DATE

16th February 2021

VENUE

Central Campus Conference Hall, UEW



For many of us, water simply flows from a faucet, and we think little about it beyond this point of contact. We have lost a sense of respect for the wild river for the complex workings of a wetlands, for the intricate web of life that water supports.

Sandra Postel

CONTENT.....	i
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	ii
1.1 Executive Summary.	1
1.2 About the Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference.	1
1.3 Objectives and Conference Outcome.....	2
1.4 Welcome Address	3
1.5 Summary and High Points from Presentations	4
1.6 Challenges Encountered.....	8
1.7 Registration and Attendance.	8
1.8 Media Coverage and Publicity	8
1.9 Covid-19 Report.....	9
1.10 Souvenirs Provision.....	10
1.11 Beyond the 2021 Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference (Expectation into 2022)	10

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

Environmental Protection Agency:	EPA
Forestry Commission:	FC
Geography Students Association:	GEOSA
Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference:	GWSC
Master of Ceremonies	MC
Muni-Pomadze Ramsar Site:	MPRS
Sustainable Development Goals:	SDGs
University of Education, Winneba:	UEW
Wetlands for Future Generation Campaign	WFGC
World Wetlands Day	WWD
Youth Legacy Ghana	YOLEG



Executive Summary.

The Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference is first ever youth-driven and youth -focused gathering in Ghana towards Wetlands. The document provides a report of the various activities and covers the success story of the maiden conference. Detailed in the document are information about the GWSC, objectives and outcomes, highlights from presentations, challenges encountered, registration and attendance, media activities, Covid-19 report, social media publicity, souvenirs report and a note about the 2022 purported conference.

About the Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference.

Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference' is a youth-focused engagement on wetlands geared towards promoting student participation in the Ramsar Convention and SDG 15. The program is one of four main agenda encapsulated in the broader program 'Wetlands for Future Generation Campaign', which is initiated to annually commemorate World Wetlands Day in Ghana, beginning from the year 2021, you may access the concept note for the 'WFGC Program' via http://youthlegacyghana.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WWD21_WETLANDS-FOR-FUTURE-GENERATION-CAMPAIGN.pdf. Outstandingly, the GWSC project is a campus engagement that seeks to create mass awareness on the sustainable use of wetland among students, with a strong emphasis on individual(s) roles of contributing to wetlands sustainability in Ghana and beyond.

The project is envisioned to build strong partnerships among multi-stakeholders to promote youth empowerment and youth participation in wetlands sustainability. The conference thus, convenes stakeholders and student associations to explore into issues of wetlands conservation and restoration of Ramsar sites in Ghana and Africa at large. Also, the conference provides a platform for presenting scholarly research papers, reports, and innovations on wetlands in the country. Just like every year, the GWSC is designated to derive its theme and focus of discussions from the annual theme for WWD. Thus, in alignment with the annual theme for WWD 2021; 'Wetlands and water', the theme "**Wetlands and Water-Inseparable Vitals of Life**" was framed for the GWSC 2021. The GWSC 2021 which happened to be the maiden edition of the conference was hosted at the University of Education, Winneba by the Department of Geography Education on Tuesday, 16th February 2021 at Central Campus Conference Hall. Partners who joined forces with Youth Legacy Ghana for the event included: The Department of Geography Education-UEW; AROCHA Ghana, Environmental Protection Agency Ghana, Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission Ghana, Geography Students Association-UEW, UEW Media Publication Unit, and Radio Windy Bay.

Objectives and Conference Outcome.

We envisaged two major objectives for the GWSC 2021, which happens to be the first-ever Youth-led approach to Wetlands Sustainability in Ghana. This post-conference report states some of the stipulated objectives and the outcomes of the GWSC. Under the auspices of Youth Legacy Ghana, and inputs from partners of the conference, all the objectives as stated in the concept note for the GWSC 2021 was achieved. You can access concept note for the GWSC via:<http://youthlegacyghana.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/GHANA-WETLANDS-SUSTAINABILITY-CONFERENCE.pdf>.

The GWSC 2021 was guided by the following objectives:

- *Educate at least 150 youth of the University of Education, Winneba on Wetlands Conservation approaches.*

With the aforementioned objective, we were able to orient and train 152 students of the University of Education, Winneba comprising of 122 undergraduate students and 30 graduate students. Also, we were able to have the presence of one (1) non-partnering organization at the event namely, Friends of the Coast. This informs us of the potentials that the event holds to providing a productive platform for policy engagement among wetlands activists.

- *Build Youth circles that will enact the sustainability of wetlands.*

We have started massive youth-engagement with the Department of Geography Education, UEW with an initial two groups constituted out of the desired 5 circles. We hope to achieve the full objective by the commencement of the 2022 Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference.

Other Objectives Achieved.

We were able to meet some unstipulated objectives namely;

- Seventy (72) of the participants have volunteered to participate in the Muni-Pomadze Ramsar Site Lagoon clean-up exercised. The clean-up exercise is one out of the four major activities conveyed in ‘WFGC-Program’. The clean-up is proposed to take place in March, 2021. The resultant action of students to participate in this course implies their urgency to translate their acquired knowledge to action post conference.
- The students had the opportunity to network with some of the stakeholders of the event which shall promote youth involvement towards addressing wetlands issues in Ghana.

Welcome Address

Mr. Adu Mensah, the Convener of the Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference and Executive Director of Youth Legacy Ghana welcomed all persons who were present for the conference. He acknowledged the chairperson for the conference, Dr. Enoch Sam, guest speakers, distinguished guests and all participants who were present at the conference. Also, He gave a keen acknowledgement to organizing and media partners for their unwavering effort towards the conference, ranging from their support in providing resource persons, advertisement, securing of venue for the conference. He explained that the conference is an avenue to commemorate the World Wetlands day in Ghana every year. He finally sensitized the participants to adhere to all Covid-19 precautions during the meeting.

Opening Remark

Following the welcome speech, was the remark from the Chairperson, Dr. Enoch Sam, Department of Geography Education, UEW. In his speech, he justified the mandate for initiating the GWSC. He submitted that, wetlands resources have been underutilized over the years in Ghana of which multi-stakeholders need to join formidable hands in order to sufficiently fight against all factors impeding the sustenance of wetlands in Ghana, especially



those relating to human activities. Dr. Sam emphasized on how students' group must be considered as a key target in the agenda for sustainable development in Ghana. He affirmed

that, students who form the youthful population of the country are the future custodians of the next generation.

Summary and High Points from Presentations

The conference was chaired by Dr. Enoch Sam of the Geography Education, Winneba. The event hosted renowned speakers with experience in the field of Wetlands Sustainability from the Department of Geography Education represented by Dr. Ishmael I. Y. Dadson, Mr. Joseph Tsagli from the Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Prosper Kwame Antwi from AROCHA Ghana, and Mrs. Vivian Aye Addo of the Forestry Commission Ghana. The MC for the conference was Mrs. Elizabeth Aye Agbovi from YOLEG.

Keynote Speech

Mr. Joseph Tsagli, the keynote speaker expounded on the theme for conference ‘*Wetlands and Water-Inseparable Vitals of Life*’. In his speech delivery, he educated the minds of youth on the relationship between wetlands and water resources.

“Wetlands are very important to mankind and that is the more reason why its management should be of the most concern to humanity. In analysing the interactions among the components of wetlands, he explained that the soil, water, nutrients as well as plants and animals allow the wetlands to perform certain ecological and natural functions and also generate products that are of socio-economic importance. Wetlands help in the prevention of floods and erosion; maintenance of the water table, purifies water and also helps in micro-climate stabilization among others. “He concluded his speech stipulating that;





“Factors such as soil salination, soil degradation, pollution, deforestation, etc. which all serves as great threats to the wetlands in Ghana”

First Presentation

The second presentation was delivered by Dr. Ishmael Yaw Dadson who spoke on the topic; “*Addressing Conservational Approaches to Wetlands Sustainability in The Context Of The Ghanaian Society*”. Dr. Dadson highlighted some of the sustainability challenges to Wetlands in Ghana induced poor and unsustainable human activities such as encroachment and catchment disturbances, unsustainable fishing and farming, and livestock grazing, introduction of weeds and pest animals, indiscriminate waste disposal, bush burning, problems with land ownership and regulation, water diversion, climate variability, and climate change.

He further indicated that in Ghana, 13 designated coastal Wetlands had been identified by saving the seashore Birds projects as the abode for feeding, roosting and nesting sites for 1,000s of migratory and residential seashore birds, namely, Keta, Muni-Pomadze, Densu, Elmina, Saltpond, Sakumo, Songhor, Kole and Essiama but five were designated by Ramsar site. He urged Ghanaians to re-consider afforestation, reforestation, and revegetation of native plants along streams. Additionally, the use of pesticides and fertilizers must be avoided or used sparingly, and bad practices such as overgrazing and pollution must be eschewed. He averred “Beware of emerging environmental problems that negatively affect wetlands”.



 GHANA WETLANDS SUSTAINABILITY
CONFERENCE 2021

HIGH POINTS FROM GWSC

Encroachment and catchment disturbances, unsustainable fishing, farming and grazing, indiscriminate waste disposal, regulation and water diversion are the major sustainability challenges to the conservation of wetlands. We need collective action now to implement positive change.

Dr. Ishmael Yaw Dadson

Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography Education
University of Education, Winneba

Second Presentation

The presentation was given by Mrs. Vivian Aye-Addo of the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission Ghana. As the Site Manager of the MPRS, she addressed *'The Current State of The Muni-Pomadze Ramsar Site'*

She noted that Muni-Pomadze being one of the coastal Ramsar sites in Ghana covers a total perimeter of 9,461.12 hectares; which comprises the Muni Lagoon, the seafront of the adjacent beach, the flood place, and it encompasses the whole Winneba township whose surrounding is shared by water.

Mrs Vivian reiterated on some issues addressed by Dr. Dadson. She pointed out that “Human pressures such as over-exploitation, drainage and conversion of wetlands, pollution and other conflicting land-use practices threaten many wetlands in Ghana including Muni-Pomadze. Hence, communities that depend on water for their livelihood can no longer depend on such sources due to water pollution.”.



Third Presentation

The presentation was delivered by our esteemed guest speaker in the person of Mr. Prosper Antwi; the Programmes Manager for AROCHA Ghana. He spoke on the topic *'Attitudinal and Behavioural Setbacks Towards the Sustainability of Wetlands in Ghana'*. In his passionate

presentation, he highlighted that humankind has deviated from the norm of conserving wetlands and rather perverted to doing more harm than good to wetlands. Mr Prosper Antwi mentioned four factors that drive the negative attitude humankind pose towards wetlands in Ghana;

1. Humans viewing wetlands as “wastelands”. Using wetland areas for infrastructural development
2. Water diversion. People creating channels through dams, dykes, and canals to divert water from wetland areas.
3. All forms of pollution and
4. A major change in land use including increasing agriculture.

He also stated that in order to reverse the trend of wetland destructions in Ghana, it requires a collective responsibility ranging from government to individuals. Some of the ways to reverse the trend include:

1. Going beyond policies. This requires policymakers to effectively implement policies regarding wetlands conservation. Harmonizing institutions to implement the policies and also integrating the wetlands issues into the national land-use planning.
2. Restoration of degraded wetlands
3. The wise use of all the remaining wetland sites in a way to meet human needs and sustains biodiversity.
4. Educating others and developing financing sources for wetlands conservation.



Challenges Encountered.

We encountered multiple challenges amidst the successful organization of the event. We have highlighted the key challenges and the coping strategies that was adopted thereof.

1.1.1 Pre-Conference Preparation Challenge—We could not secure a venue for the conference earlier to enhance the registration of larger number of participants. This is due to the organizer’s inability to fast-track the processes of securing the venue and restrictions posed by Covid-19.

- The Department of Geography Education-UEW assisted and secured the Central Campus Conference Hall for the event.
- We shall progress with early pre-conference preparation activities in the subsequent events by securing a venue that can host more participants.

1.1.2 Financial Constraint—even though the conference was financially demanding, the organizers of the event could not secure enough funds to prepare well for the conference. The menial contribution raised was from the associates of Youth Legacy. Due to the insufficient funds mobilized for the conference, some preparational activities such as; *stage setting, honorarium to speakers, busing of students, provision of snack package, a publication of conference proceedings, the printing of tee-shirts, and intensification of publicity social media* could not be actualized.

- We hope to secure enough funds to finance the next conference through early call for partnership, and proper budget preparation.

Registration and Attendance.

A total number of 210 people registered for the conference. This comprised of individuals 102 persons who registered via the *online registration portal* and 108 persons who registered through the *manual registration form*. However, the turnout to the event was 152 attendees; dominated by Undergraduate Students, Lecturers, Graduate Students, and Civil Society organizations. The attendance recorded depicts the interest of Youth in matters concerning the sustainability of Wetlands in Ghana.

Media Coverage and Publicity

The Department of Geography Education, UEW liaised with the University of Education, Winneba Publications to take full coverage of the conference. The publications took pictures and wrote a report about the event. Th report has been published on the University of Education,

Winneba website, <https://uew.edu.gh/news/yoleg-partnership-department-geography-education-observes-world-wetlands-day>. In addition, we hired a standby videography team to take some videos and provide a video coverage of the event.

The success story of the conference has been published to GHEN Environment through the link <https://ghenvironment.org/university-students-targeted-for-wetlands-sustainability-in-ghana>.

Social Media and Publicity.

In making such an important gathering effective, we increased publicity on four major social media handles.

- **World Wetlands Day Portal:** We hosted and registered the event on the global WWD platform, <https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>, a global platform that features numerous events towards the commemoration of the World Wetlands Day 2021.
- **Facebook:** We created an event on the Youth Legacy Ghana's Facebook page and boosted the event to reach 18,027 people with 188 event responses. There were numerous comments and private chats on WhatsApp from people across Ghana expressing interest.
- **Twitter:** We took to our twitter handle to make the event very popular. There was twitter engagement from prominent organizations such as; IPBES, UN Biodiversity, Wetlands International, EcoLife Kenya, and other organizations. Our twitter activity reached a minimum of 3000 twitter users per-tweet.
- **LinkedIn:** On the professional LinkedIn handle, Youth Legacy Ghana created an event on 16th February 2021 to have an onsite engagement through sharing of Wetlands posters. The LinkedIn event has 43 people interested from beyond Ghana, which informs us on the global outreach of the event.

Covid-19 Report

All Covid-19 protocols were implemented for the 2021 Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference. We had security at the very entrance into the premises of the Central Campus taking the temperature text, a hand sanitizer right at the door of the conference hall for each participant to get sanitized, and volunteers who conducted the nose mask check. The spacing of participants was good enough to adhere to social distancing precautions. We also as observed proper handling of microphones by speakers.

Souvenirs Provision.

The organizers also provided souvenirs (Tee-Shirt) at the cost of 25cedis. A total of 35 students purchased the souvenirs.

Beyond the 2021 Ghana Wetlands Sustainability Conference (Expectation into 2022)

The Convener and Co-Conveners of the event aspires to include more innovations in the 2022 edition of the event such as;

- **Wetlands Sustainability Innovation Hub.** This hub shall call on youth to innovate and build strategic solutions that will either educate, implement, enforce and/or ensure the conservation of diminishing Wetlands in Ghana.
- **Wetlands Journal Articles.** The conference shall establish the Ghana Wetlands Journal which will be the first-ever document to encapsulate research and projects from academics and civil society organizations.
- **Project and Research Presentation.** This is to give space for researchers and organizations to present their actions and projects for deliberation, data presentation, and to inform policymaking.

Financing.

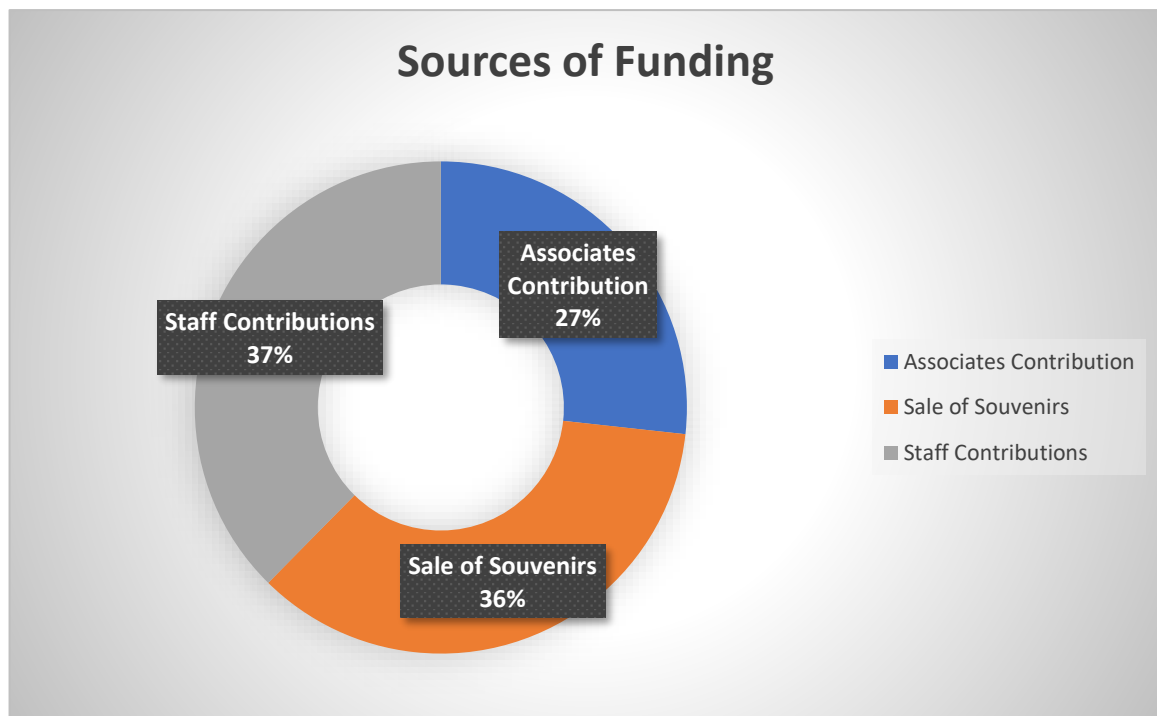


Table 1: Sources of Income

Source of Fund	Amount Raised
Staff/Volunteers Contributions	925.00
Associates Contribution	675.00
Sale of Souvenirs	900.00
Total	2,500.00

Table 2: Expenditure Breakdown

Item	Amount
Printing of Souvenirs	850.00
Water for Participants	250.00
Snack Package for Dignitaries	250.00
Souvenirs for Dignitaries	250.00
Snack Package for Volunteers	300.00
Social Media Publicity	100.00
Design of Flyers	200.00
Transport for Team	300.00
Total	2,500.00



GHANA WETLANDS SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE
2021

Convened By



In Partnership With



Department of Geography
Education, UEW



GHANA
ROCHA
Caring for God's Creation





ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

