

## THE ROLE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT-PARTICULARLY THE YOUTH- PLAYS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA

Kofi, sits hunched over a laptop, busy typing codes and strings of characters. With a phone on loudspeaker, he struggles to convince the person on the other end of the phone call to give him her mobile money pin. In another part of Ghana, Richmond sits at the very front row, clutching his bet slip, watching the game intensely. He prays that his team wins, so that he wins too. Mary just got back from her interview. Her body shivering despite the unbearable heat that climate change has brought. She was interviewed by the top boss -not for skills she acquired with her business administration degree but for skills that she was bestowed upon biologically. All three individuals although so different have one haunting question on their minds. Was it all worth it? The school fees, uniform fees, and every other fee that brought no profit into the pockets of their parents and guardians. There are no jobs, no opportunities, just hunger and debt and the constant urge to survive by all means necessary. How long have the youth cried out for help? Only to be ignored by the leaders and systems that ought to support them. The leaders say that we are gradually on the path as a country to achieve sustainable development but where lies the truth?

Sustainable development involves meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It includes economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. It is, however, key for Ghana to understand how crucial a role human resource development play in this. Ghana is rich in natural resources, cultural strength and untapped potential which cannot be utilized when there is inadequate human resource to exploit, manage and preserve them. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana has a predominantly youthful population. Specifically, individuals aged 15 to 24 years-the youth-constituted approximately 20.3% of the total population, amounting to about 6.26million people out the total population. This alone shows that solving the problems of the youth in relation to national development will steer Ghana towards sustainable development.

In recent years, we have seen how detrimental the silence and apathy shown concerning the problems of the youth has sunk the country further in an abyss of crisis. As a result of this, the youth have engaged in social vices including substance abuse, internet fraud (Sakawa), prostitution, cultism, environmental degradation through illegal mining and bush burning, violence among many others all in order to provide income. These activities have led to increase in crime rate, generating tensions in the where they are practiced. These tensions affect the peace and stability in those regions and the nation as a whole. This scares away foreign investors and can greatly cripple the tourism industry, damaging the economy in the long run.

In the same way, the youth can also positively aid in sustainable development of the country. They can participate in pollution control exercises that can protect the environment from degradation such as participating in anti- illegal mining raids with the police, establishing small scale businesses and entrepreneurship in order to use their skills in providing income, employment and revenue. These businesses can also provide the government with services and products to export to reduce import burden. The youth can also encourage recycling thereby reducing pollution through innovative recycling initiatives such as recycling old water sachets into umbrellas. They can also prevent crimes by

collaborating with law enforcement agencies as well as remaining vigilant. These actions can bring the country closer to sustainable development than ever.

How can we achieve this transformation? It starts with solving the problems of the youth. One significant problem facing the youth is the knowledge based educational system which lays more emphasis on theory and almost little on practical and technical skills. This causes a majority of the youth graduate from the various tertiary institutions with only theory and little practical skills. The government must reorient the knowledge based educational system by establishing more STEM schools and programs as well as TVET (Technical Vocational Education Training) Institutions and thoroughly invest in them. The youth also face the challenge of inadequate skills and training acquisition. The government can solve this problem by organizing trainings and workshop to equip them with additional skills and knowledge. This reduces dependence on foreign expertise when we can depend on our own. Also, the government can invest in youth entrepreneurship by granting them loans and partnerships.

In conclusion, this is a critical issue Ghana needs to discuss urgently and employ steps to achieve. After all, equipping the youth means equipping the future and empowering the youth means securing the future.

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