

## **REPORT OF VISIT OF SOME MEMBERS OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE TO NORTHERN, NORTH EAST AND UPPER EAST REGIONS, FROM 7TH TO 11TH AUGUST, 2022**

The National Executives decided to visit the various regions to find out what is happening in the various regions. In this regard, the National President, Prof Helen Yitah, the Secretary, Agatha Akapame and the Financial Secretary, Ramatu Wasai-Limann visited three (3) out of the five (5) regions in which GNG is present. These were the Northern, North East and Upper East Regions. The team could not visit all the sites in each region where trees supplied by GNG had been planted. We were only able to visit sites to which the Coordinators or the lead people took us. The report therefore covers these areas and not the entire regions.

### **1. Tour in the Northern Region: August 8<sup>th</sup> 2022**

The Executives left Accra on 7th August and arrived in Tamale by 3:34 am on the 8th. It was around 5:00 am that we could secure accommodation. Having rested, we called Greeners Alhaji Alhassan Square and Danladi. After an initial hitch, we were able to agree on a programme for the day.

#### **a. Visit to Woribogu School**

Led by Greener Square, the Coordinator for Northern Region, we set off for Woribogu, the first place of visit. We met the headmaster, Mr Salifu Sumalia, who warmly welcomed us. After telling him our mission, he said they did plant trees last year on the compound and along the boundary of the school land to demarcate it. However, while the school was on holidays, farmers who had earlier encroached on the land went and ploughed part of their school land to sow their crops, uprooting most of the seedlings planted along the school boundary. By the time schools reopened, most of the trees had been ploughed off. According to Mr. Sumaila, they planted more than 500 seedlings and about 150 were ploughed off. This was very unfortunate, because the seedlings that were not ploughed survived and looked quite grown and healthy. We were happy to learn that the head, who himself is enthusiastic about tree planting, got about 50 additional seedlings which they replanted on parts of the land that had not been ploughed by farmers. The surviving trees and seedling that were planted were mainly neem and acacia. We thanked the headteacher and left for the Jiagbo shrine where trees had been planted by GNG.

#### **b. The Trees at Jiagbo Shrine**

We did not go into the shrine; we stopped at the area where the trees were planted. According to Greener Alhassan Square, the chief of Tolon had given out 50 acres of land for afforestation and said that anyone who was willing to plant trees there could do so. The YEA had planted trees on a portion of that land, but some of the seedlings did not survive. GNG had acquired 1,500 seedlings which were planted to replace those by YEA that did not survive. The trees on this land were mainly acacia, but there were some shea trees that had mostly sprouted from tree stumps and were growing naturally on the land. According to Alhaji Square, they encouraged the farmers not to cut these shea sprouts but to try and nurture them because every stump is a potential tree. Most of the trees planted by GNG had survived.

### **c. Visit to Gbulahagu JHS**

From Jiagbo, our last place of visit was the Gbulahagu JHS. The school had already closed by the time we got there, but we met a teacher by name Abdul Wadud. According to him, they also planted trees along the boundaries of the school, but encroaching farmers ploughed the trees away and sowed their crops. Alhaji Square reported that GNG supplied 550 seedlings to this school, but we counted only 12 surviving trees that were well fenced and nurtured. Those trees were doing well. Six other trees that were planted in the middle of grass along the road leading to the school were, from all indications, not receiving care. One could hardly notice them because of the grass around them. The total number of trees that we could find at Gbulahagu was 18.

We expressed our disappointment to the teacher, Mr. Wadud. From his comments, it seemed to us that there was no close collaboration between the school and the community and that there was very little commitment to nurturing trees around the school. The school compound looked weedy and there was litter all over the place. When we asked the teacher about this situation, he responded that if they told the pupils considered it a punishment to be told by teachers to weed the grass and therefore refused to do so.

### **d. Visit to NDA**

From Gbulahagu school we returned to Tamale town and paid a courtesy call on NDA to remind them about an earlier conversation we had with them regarding a possible collaboration between us.

At NDA, we met and had a healthy discussion with Mr Stephen Yir-eru Engmen, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Mr Iddi Zakaria, the PRO. At the end of it, Mr Engmen asked us to write to them as a follow up to our earlier communication with NDA. He informed us that NDA had made provision for tree planting in their medium-term plan. He was hopeful that this time round there would be a positive result in the form of help from NDA. We then went back to our places of accommodation to rest for the day.

## **2. Visit to the North East Region: 9<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

The second day of our visit found us in the North East Region. We left Tamale by 7:00 am and headed for Nalerigu Senior High School.

The enthusiasm shown by the administration, staff and students was very impressive. They had organised an elaborate programme to receive us. We were first ushered into the headmaster's office. There, we met the headmaster (who, despite nursing a shoulder injury, had delayed his visit to the hospital in order to meet us) and other teachers. The head, the assistant head (domestic), the senior house mistress, the club patron and other staff were present. After welcoming us, the headmaster briefed us about how the Green Club had been working hard to plant trees. He was full of praise for the patron and his assistant. He mentioned that almost all the staff had joined the NASS GNG Club. We thanked him for the warm reception and the strong support and encouragement offered to the Club. After this session, we were led to one of the classrooms to meet the students of the club.

There was an opening prayer by one of the executive members, Master Joseph Azumah, after which the club executives introduced themselves, and then the club patron, Mr Razak Abdulai, introduced us to the students.

The patron of the club, Mr. Razak, gave a brief address in which he talked about the activities of the club. He mentioned that the club has been very active since its inauguration and that they had over 200 members. He said they planted the trees on the compound and along the boundaries of the school. He added that they had fenced off a piece of land on which they intended to use to nurse seedlings. He explained that they would plant some of the seedlings and sell the rest to other people interested in planting them. They would also make the final year students ambassadors of tree planting in their communities. The ambassadors would not only come back to the nursery and collect seedlings to plant back home but would also educate their parents and communities on the value of planting trees. Mr. Razak then introduced the rest of the teachers.

When the club president addressed us, he said that for them tree planting was important because it improves upon their lives. He mentioned some of the benefits of joining the club such as the acquisition of leadership skills, employment opportunities and even getting food from the trees. He went on to talk about the activities of the club and mentioned some of the things he thought would be incentives to motivate them to work harder. These included T-shirts; tools like watering cans, hoes, and cutlasses; membership cards and so on.

Greener Prof Helen Yitah told the club that plans were already underway for the printing of the membership cards. She said that whilst we cannot satisfy all their demands at the moment, we would put a plan in place to meet some of the needs of the Club.

Greener Helen took the opportunity to express our joy at the work the Club was doing and said GNG is prepared to support them in any way we can to plant trees. She said we were particularly happy that both staff and students have taken tree planting seriously, especially in this part of the country where global warming and climate change is affecting us so severely. Both Greeners Agatha and Ramatu took turns to advise and encourage the students. At the end of the day, a tree was planted by Prof. Helen Yitah, assisted by the club patron. We left NASS at about 3:00pm. When we got to the radio station there was no one there, so no radio talk was given. We also could not go to either Bunkpurigu or Nakpanduri because even though we had made prior arrangements with our contact persons and we had been assured that they would be expecting us, we could not reach them at this point to confirm their availability to meet with us, and we did not want to make the journey to these two towns without the needed confirmation. Throughout the day we put several calls through to the contact persons there, but we did not receive any response, nor were our calls returned. We therefore returned to Walewale and headed for Bolgatanga.

### **3. Visit to the Upper East Region: 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

The Visit to Upper East started the same day that we arrived in Bolga, that is 9<sup>th</sup> August.

#### **a. Inspection of GNG Office in Bolgatanga**

First, we met Greener Paul Yin at the premises of the GNG office. When he unlocked the office and showed us around, he told us that he had taken a carpenter and a painter to look at

the room and determine what needed to be done to get it ready for use. The carpenter told him that some of the roofing nails were loose, and this caused the roof to leak. We realized that much of the ceiling needed to be replaced. Some louvres were also missing. There was an old air condition that needed to be removed and replaced with louvres. The lock needed to be changed and the walls painted. There were also some electrical fittings that needed to be worked on. When we finished the inspection, Greener Paul handed us some invoices he had received from the carpenter and the painter who had earlier looked at the room. He also gave us the phone number for the carpenter, whom we contacted and scheduled a meeting for the following day.

#### **b. Tour of Evergreen School and Victory School**

The next place we visited was the Evergreen School, where Greener Henry Adivila said he had supplied seedlings that had been planted in 2021. We were received by the headmaster, Mr Samuel Owusu Manu. He welcomed us and told us that he himself is making the effort to plant trees and that at Bongo he has for the past 4 years been planting 100 trees a year. He said whilst some of the seedlings he received from GNG were planted on the school compound, he had sent a good majority of them to the women's group he works with in Bongo. We were very happy to see that the trees he planted only a year earlier had grown very tall. He conducted us round the school and we saw other seedlings that were planted this year. He said he planted 200 trees last year and took 100 seedlings this year. At the time of the visit, however, some of the seedlings were yet to be taken away for transplanting. He promised to call the leader of the group he works with at Bongo and arrange for us to go there on the 11<sup>th</sup> August to look at the trees.

#### **c. Visit to Bolgatanga Girls' SHS**

From Evergreen School we went to Victory JHS. The school had closed but we had the opportunity to look at the trees. All the trees we saw there were grown, and they looked very healthy. From Victory School we went to Bolgatanga Girls Secondary School (BOGISS). Again, it was only the security guards we met there, but they allowed us to go round and look at the trees, and we were happy to see that most of the trees had survived and were doing very well. They actually looked almost like full-grown trees.

From BOGISS we went home, arriving around 8.00pm to rest for the day.

#### **d. Visit to Bawku on 10<sup>th</sup> August, the Third Day of Our Visit.**

The third day of our visit found us in Bawku and its environs.

We were met by Greener Peter Aduala at Zebilla and he led us to Zebilla Senior High Technical School. The headmaster had travelled, but we met the Assistant Headmaster, the Acting Head of the Agric Department and one Mr Cambodia, a technical person who is in charge of trees and the environment of the school. The Assistant Headmaster welcomed us and said they had been informed that we would visit their school. Greener Helen talked to the staff we met about GNG and the purpose of our visit. We tried to find out from them whether there was a Green Club in their school and the response was negative. We therefore took the opportunity to explain to them the essence of having one in the school. According to the Assistant Headmaster and the Head of Agric, the School had planted some trees, but their

challenge was the drought that set in afterwards. He also mentioned that animals that come into the school compound graze on the tree seedlings, thereby destroying them. He ended his speech by appealing for watering cans and we also encouraged them to fence all the trees. We went to the sites where they had planted trees and quite a good number were fenced with cement blocks. All those that were fenced had all survived and were doing well. We encouraged them to use sticks from the shrubs around to make fences, as we had seen done at other places, and tie the sticks together at the top so that animals cannot jump over. According to the Head of Agric, they had planted about 200 trees, but they were waiting for the drought to be over before they would transplant the rest of the seedlings. Since it had rained the previous day, they were hopeful that they could transplant the rest of the seedlings before the close of week. We then left to Binduri Community Day SHS.

#### **e. Visit to Binduri Community Day SHS**

The story at Binduri SHS was quite impressive. We met the Senior House Master and Mistress of the school in the persons of Mr. Bernard Abanga and Ms. Gifty Ayamga. The school is quite young and so new structures were still being put up. Mr. Abanga said they had taken 250 seedlings from GNG, of which they had planted 102 and were waiting to transplant the others after the drought. The strategy they adopted was that every student from first year to third year had a seedling to nurture and if anyone allowed the seedling to wither off, it was the responsibility of that student to look for a seedling of same species and plant it. As a result, students were taking care of their individual seedlings.

When we spoke to Mr. Abanga about GNG, our activities and the need to plant trees and make their students ambassadors of tree planting, he impressed upon us to have a talk with the students even though we were hard pressed for time. We met the students and talked to them about GNG and why they should plant trees. It was a fruitful interaction as we fielded questions from the students. We then moved together with the students and staff to where the trees were planted. Most of the trees had survived but needed proper fencing to ward off animals. What was remarkable about this school was that the students showed a passion for what they were doing. We encouraged them to keep it up.

Both students and staff expressed the desire to have fruit or economic trees. We told them we did not have any at that time, but we mentioned to them that we had a collaboration with the Ghana Productivity Safety Net Project (GPSNP) to supply us with cashew seedlings through the district assemblies, so this could be pursued through the UER Coordinator, Greener Peter Aduala. We also mentioned that GNG had plans to nurse some seedlings, and that if these plans materialised, then we could produce and supply our own economic tree seedlings in the near future. We thanked them for their reception and proceeded to the next place, Nafkolga Primary and JHS.

#### **f. Visit to Nafkolga Primary and JHS**

When we arrived, the school had already closed since it was getting to 4:00 pm. The headmasters of both schools and a few pupils were waiting for us. To put things bluntly, there was not much to see except a few seedlings planted in the middle of grass. More worrying for us was that we were told the school term had just ended that day, so the question on our minds was how those few seedlings planted in the grass could survive without fencing and without pupils in school to take care of them. The headmaster for the JHS assured us that they

told the pupils to bring sticks the following day to fence the trees and that pupils living around the school would be asked water the plants. Greener Peter assured us that he would follow up with the schools and send us updates.

**g. Visit to Ofori Atta Memorial Institute at Nayoko Number 2**

From Nafkolga we left for our last place of visit for the day, Nayoko Number 2, where we visited the Ofori Atta Memorial Institute. Here we met the pastor in charge of the school, Pastor Noah. He showed us the seedlings that had been planted. We saw thirty seedlings that had just been planted the previous day and were still tender. The pastor promised to transplant the rest of the seedlings in the Nayoko community and 4 other primary and junior high schools within the community.

From the Ofori Atta Memorial Institute we left for Bolgatanga, arriving at about 9:00pm.

**Wrap Up and Return to Accra—11<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

One the last day of our visit, Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup>, we wrapped up in Bolga and began our return to Accra. Unfortunately, we could not visit Bongo because the person who was to show us the trees was out of town. Greener Henry had also put us in contact with Lawrence Atongo and one Julius who had collected seedlings for planting. When contacted, both of them said that due to the drought they had not been able to plant the trees. Therefore, we could not meet any of the people we were hoping to meet except the carpenter and the painter. After trying without success to get them reduce the cost of the renovation as captured in their invoices, we headed for Tamale, where we boarded the bus for Accra.

Report compiled by the secretary.

Agatha Akapame.