

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE CHOICES AND THE BUILT-ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF GHANA<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The unprecedented growth of cities and urban centres in our modern world, along with their associated environmental pressures, is a concern we must address to ensure a healthy life. Thus, concepts such as environmental education and sustainable lifestyle choices, as well as the built environment, represent deliberate and innovative efforts by scientists, environmentalists, and scholars to mitigate the adverse impacts resulting from human efforts to improve living standards on Earth. Currently, much literature exists in the field of Urban Development Studies that discusses environmental education, sustainable lifestyle choices, and the built environment. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the desired impact is yet to be achieved. While some people recognise the importance of their consumption choices and care about environmental issues, most of them unfortunately do not translate their concerns into concrete actions when purchasing goods and services. The situation is worse in Ghana because most people are unaware of the impact of their lifestyles on the physical environment. Using a desk study and primary research approach, this paper explores the relationship between environmental education and sustainable lifestyles, and their combined impact on ensuring the well-being of the built environment in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Ghana, Urban Development, Urban Centres, Environmental Education, Sustainable Lifestyle Choices, built-up environment, Slums.

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## **Introduction**

Currently, much literature exists in the field of Urban Development Studies that discusses the issue of environmental education and sustainable lifestyle choices and the built environment (Pardo and Echavarren, 2021; Anderson et al., 2015; Kouamou and Pettang, 2008; Albert Novas Somanje et al, 2020; Cobbina and Darkwah, 2017; Cobbina and Erdiaw-Kwasie, 2018; National Development Planning Commission, 2022). Yet the literature seems to suggest that not much impact has been made from the efforts. In Ghana, the challenge extends beyond individual awareness to systemic limitations in infrastructure and policy implementation. These constraints complicate efforts to translate environmental concern into sustained behavioural and structural change within urban spaces.

The question then arises: is there justification for a sub-disciplinary field such as Urban Studies? The answer is an emphatic yes, given the urgency of contemporary realities. Urbanisation is occurring at an unprecedented rate in our history, bringing with it significant socio-economic, health and environmental consequences.

Although these challenges may be the case in many developing and some developed countries, the situation is different in Ghana especially in relation to the built environment. For instance, several initiatives have sought to make Accra, Ghana's capital city, the cleanest in Sub-Saharan Africa, but the aspiration remains largely unrealised. The World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme (WBSP) reported that Ghana's economy was losing \$90 million annually (GHC420 million – 1.6% of GDP) due to poor sanitation (GNA, 2012). Furthermore, a sanitation survey conducted in 2008 ranked Ghana 14th out of 15 West African countries and 48th out of the 53 (now 54) countries on the continent, indicating limited progress in sanitation development (GNA, 2008; see also Awuah-Nyamekye, 2013).

Although these statistics are more than fifteen years old, subsequent developments suggest that the challenges persist. For example, the previous government, that assumed office in 2016 pledged that within two years every community in Ghana would be provided with toilets and water facilities. However, this commitment was not fulfilled during its eight year tenure. These factors demonstrate that urbanisation related challenges remain pressing concerns in Ghana.

## **Methodology**

This paper presents findings derived from research conducted using data from two primary sources. The first came from some key stakeholders such as Policy-decision makers, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (the institution mandated to enforce the environmental laws in Ghana), Town and Country Planning officials, and some Chief Executives of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies in Ghana. The selection of the above groups was informed by the fact that they constituted the major stakeholders of the issues under consideration. These stakeholders were purposively selected and interviewed. The second source came from secondary material in the form of a review of existing literature in the field (of environmental studies or urban studies (Anderson et al.2015; Addo-Fordwuor, Dominic, 2014; Cobbina and Darkwah, 2017; Cobbina and Erdiaw-Kwasie, 2018; National Development Planning Commission, 2022) in Ghana. Aside from these two major sources for the data for the study, opinions of some urban dwellers in... were also purposively sought on the subject matter to supplement the data before a composite analysis of the data was done.

## **Conceptual Clarification of Key Terms**

### ***Environmental Education***

In this paper, environmental education refers to the processes in which the individual or members of a society are equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools and skills to minimise the damage that results from their interaction with their local ecosystem.

### ***Sustainable Lifestyle Choices***

A sustainable lifestyle can be defined as a mode of living that consciously seeks to limit individual or collective consumption of natural resources. This approach entails the adoption of practices designed to minimise environmental degradation resulting from resource exploitation, thereby safeguarding ecological integrity, public health, and the well-being of current and future generations.

### ***Built-Environment***

The understanding of this concept in this study aligns with existing literature that generally views the concept as the human-constructed surroundings that support human activities, including buildings, transport systems and landscapes. It encompasses the design, construction, management, and use of these structures as an interrelated system impacting the behaviour and well-being of the people who utilise them. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/engineering/built-environment>). Today, the definition of the built environment has been expanded by public health research to include healthy food access, community gardens, walkability, and bikability (<http://www.ieltsinternational.com/>). It is important to note that research has shown that the built environment not only consumes about 62% of final energy produced but is also seen as a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, emitting about 55% (Anderson et al.2015). This makes the built environment a key component in urban studies.

### ***Urban/Urbanisation***

The term urban may have different meanings depending on the country involved, but in this paper, I adopt the one provided by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) (2010), where the term urbanisation is used to describe the process of growth or increase in the population reported to live in localities classified as “urban” in Ghana. This is presented relative to the population living in localities that are defined as rural.

### ***Urban Development***

Kouamou and Pettang (2008) see the concept of urban development as ‘the act of improving living conditions, which are necessary for rest and for labour, for the health and education facilities, for the various exchanges and provisioning, for the moving of the population between their dwellings and their working place’.

This is, therefore, seen as a process that involves the socio-cultural, including economic and physical changes of cities, and the underlying factors for these changes.

### ***Urban slum***

Slum has been defined from various perspectives. But historically, the word “slum” was first used in London at the start of the 19th century to describe a “room of low repute” or “low, unfrequented parts of the town”, but it has since undergone significant change in meaning and usage (UN-HABITAT, 2003). Generally, Slums, and urban slums specifically, refer to settlements, neighbourhoods, or city regions that are unable to provide basic amenities to their residents. The people living in slums often endure unsafe and unhealthy environments (<https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/94794/1/Unit-5.pdf>).

The above simply means that the term urban slum is a description of very poor and low-class settlement areas, either within or close to cities or large towns, usually unplanned and often their development is characterised by spontaneity.



Fig. 1. Part of Ashiaman, a suburb of Accra (photographed by the author, 2024)



Fig. 2. An area at Malam junction in Accra (photographed by the author, 2024)



Fig. 3 (photographed by the author, 2024)

### ***Urban Agglomeration/ Conurbation/ Urban Sprawl***

Closely associated with urban slums are terms such as urban agglomeration, Conurbation, and urban sprawl. These are terms which may be used interchangeably to describe the process where a city or town rapidly grows spatially to annex other nearby localities which originally were not part of the city or town such that it is difficult to find where the boundary of the city or town ends and the other “annexed” localities begin (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010; Chuanglin and Danlin, 2017). Often, the localities that eventually become part of the city or town may suffer from challenges of a lack of basic household facilities or services, including electricity, potable water supply, sanitation, health and education.

In Ghana, one may mention some areas in Kasoa, Adenta and Nsawam, which have been seen as suburbs or part of Accra, the capital city of Ghana.

## **RESULTS**

### **Overview of Urbanisation in Ghana**

Available literature indicates that Ghana’s population has not only witnessed rapid growth but also rapid urbanisation since its independence (Ghana Statistical Service 2010). This has partly been attributed to some of the policies put in place by the colonial administration, such as the development bias in favour of the large towns. This policy has been largely sustained by post-colonial governments. Nkrumah, for instance, sought to transform the country into a modern semi-industrialised state, making the state machinery the agent of development. He launched the 1963/64–1969/70 Plan for National Reconstruction and Development, focusing on industrialisation (GSS, 2014).

In addition, based on available data, the rising pace of urbanisation in Ghana has been driven by rural-urban migration, natural population growth in towns and cities, and the reclassification of villages as they reach the threshold population of 5,000 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013, p. 223). In the same document, Ghana has transitioned from a predominantly rural to an urban population, with more than half (50.9%) of the country’s population residing in urban localities. For instance, Ghana’s urban population has grown from only 9.4 per cent in 1931 to 13.9 per cent in 1948, 23 per cent in 1960, 28.9 per cent in 1970, 31.3 per cent in 1984,

and 43.9 per cent in 2000 to 50.9 per cent in 2010. This makes Ghana one of the fastest urbanising countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Somanje et. al., 2020).

It is estimated that, by 2030, 65% of Ghana's population is expected to live in urban areas, which will be a 13.5% increase in just twenty years. Such rapid, urban growth puts pressure on infrastructure and services such as housing and water supply, while compounding undesirable effects such as pollution, waste, and urban poverty. (Ghana Urban Management Pilot Programme (GUMPP), 2012).

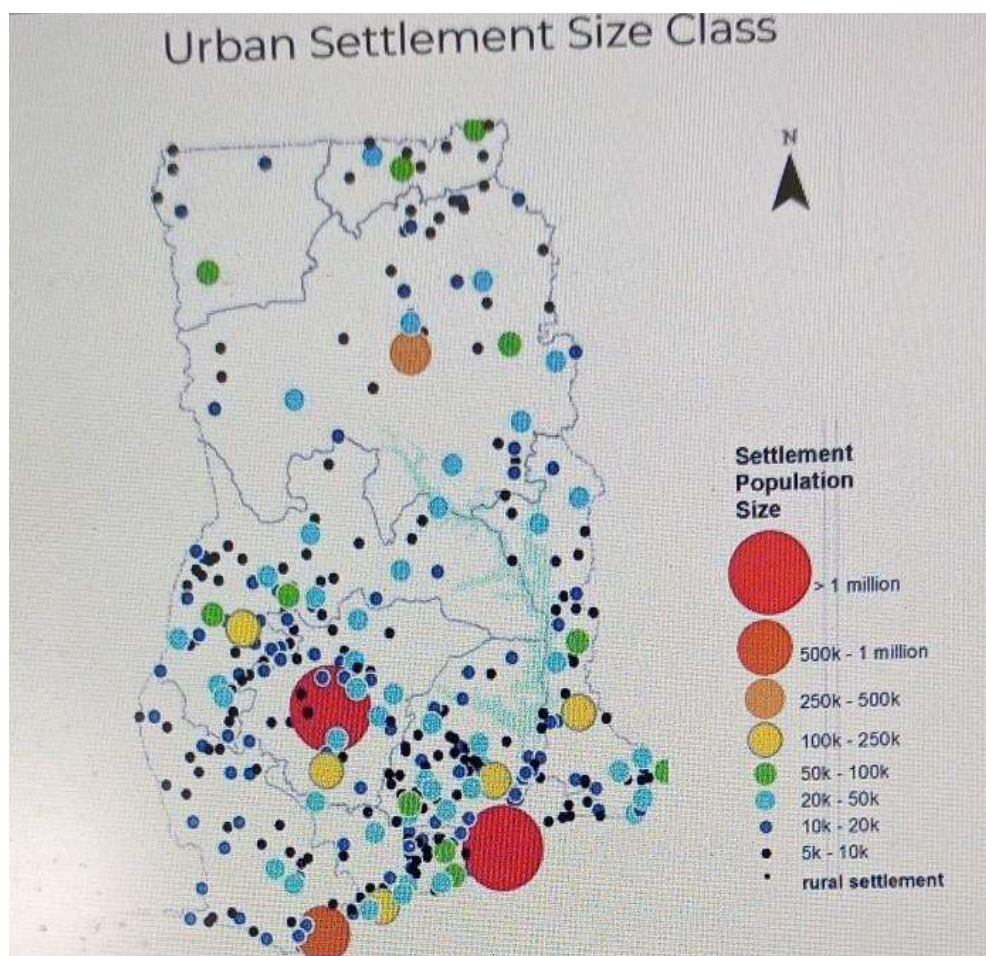


Fig. 4. Source: Mohammed Adjei Sowah, 2018

Just as it happens in other jurisdictions, Ghana relies mainly on survey and population census data for planning, including urbanisation and its related issues.

In Ghana, using the 2010 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), several reports have been prepared, including six monographs which were published in 2012 and 2013. The compilation was a collaborative effort between the GSS and Local consultants from research institutions and universities in Ghana, with funding from the Government of Ghana and various Development Partners (DPs). Since then, there have been an additional eight monographs, significant among these additional monographs is the one on ‘Urbanisation in Ghana’, which focuses on ‘population distribution in Ghana relative to the locality of residence (urban/rural), levels, trends and differentials in urbanisation in Ghana as well as the drivers of migration in Ghana’.

These make it imperative for us to delve into it and, particularly, the reason (s) for its rise and how to deal with its associated consequences.

### **The Associated Problems**

It is a fact that Ghana’s political and administrative structure is underpinned by urban planning practice, but there is enough evidence to show that urban planning has failed to create liveable and functional cities in Ghana (Cobbina and Darkwah, 2017; Cobbina and Erdiaw-Kwasie, 2018; National Development Planning Commission, 2022). For instance, with the pace of urbanisation, many available free green lands are being used for the construction of buildings, roads, bridges, etc. Even wetlands or waterways are being filled for construction purposes. This negatively affects the greenery in the cities, particularly in cities such as Accra, Tema, and Kumasi.

### ***Some of the major characteristics of urbanisation in Ghana***

#### ***Loss of Green Spaces***

Just as I have pointed out earlier, the green spaces in urban centres in Ghana are constantly being lost to activities such as building more residential areas, roads, educational institutions, markets, and other facilities. These developments, unfortunately, do not follow any proper or sustainable planning. Kumasi, for instance, used to be known as the ‘Garden city’ due to the green spaces found in the city, but today this accolade is being lost because of the fast rate at which the green spaces are being lost. A study by Addo-Fordwuo (2014) attributed the

situation to ‘the high land rent for other land uses, laxity in the enforcement of development controls and low priority to green spaces by city authorities.’ A mention can be made of the loss of the Kumasi town forest at Ahodwo roundabout, where we have the City Hotel situated on both sides.

### ***The phenomenon of filling wetlands, valleys and waterways for the building of houses and other projects***

It is now a common practice in the cities for people to buy land in waterways to build houses. River Subin in Kumasi, for instance, is now a dead river because people have built in the channel or the course of the river, such that it is difficult to see the original course of this river. This practice has resulted in flooding whenever there is a heavy downpour of rain. Another common scene emerging in urban communities in Ghana today is people using excavators to remove parts of the hills along the roads to build houses, and this has been causing mudslides to block even asphalted roads when it rains. A typical example is the road from the Kasoa toll booth to the Mallam junction area on the Cape Coast-Accra highway. This usually results in the conversion of a dual-carriage road into a single-lane road, always resulting in a traffic jam after the slightest rainfall on this part of the road. On many occasions, this has delayed drivers for more than an hour over a distance of less than a quarter of a kilometre.



Fig. 5. Traffic jam between Kasoa toll booth and Mallam junction on the Cape Coast-Accra highway (photographed by the author, 2024)

### ***Poor Drainage system***

Many of the drains in our cities are either open, shallow, or unable to contain the runoff water when it rains. This causes floods with the dirty water ending up in people's homes, shops, and other properties, causing the loss of properties or even lives at times.



Fig. 6 Some drains in Kumasi (photographed by a Research Assistant, 2024)

Closely connected with this is the fact that these drainages are misdirected, with most places getting flooded whenever it rains. An instance of this was the flood that occurred at the Kwame Nkrumah Circle in Accra in 2015, which claimed 154 lives and many injuries.

### ***Blockage of demarcated access roads with buildings***

It is important to note that, unlike the developed countries where agencies in charge of regulating buildings and other infrastructure follow laid down environmental protocols, in many cities/urban centres in Ghana, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials and the Building Inspectors at the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are not doing their work as expected of them. This is because there is evidence that prospective land developers build in unauthorised areas. Aside from the above, in some instances, house owners make illegal extensions of their buildings and thereby create an obstruction to the original layout of an area, a situation that usually affects the proper road networks in those areas. Also, there is the problem of getting land for the purposes of dumping waste materials generated in the cities. Even in the little land that has been acquired, there is the problem of technological resources for developing sustainable and final disposal systems (Adjei Sowah, 2018).

Additionally, due to poor planning, many of the buildings have bad ventilation, and this has accompanying health problems for humans.

### *Urban Slum Development*

Because of a sharp increase in population in the urban centres due to rural-urban migration and other factors, accommodation has become a problem in urban communities in Ghana. This situation has compelled many to live in makeshift structures, thereby creating slums in urban centres. In Accra, one can mention areas such as Sodom and Gomorrah, Amui Djor, Ashaiman, Agbogbloshie, Old Fadama, Jamestown, Maamobi, etc. In Kumasi, mention can be made of Kotokoo just behind the Suame Police station, Suame Magazine, Aboabo, Asawase, Oforikrom, Anloga, Ayigya Zongo, and Sisaakyi. In Takoradi, one can find slums at places like Kojokrom and New Takoradi.



Fig. 7. Kotokoo in Kumasi (photographed by a Research Assistant, 2024)



Fig. 8 Ashiaman in Accra (Photographed by the author, 2024).



Fig. 9. Malam junction area in Accra (photographed by the author, 2024).

The above-mentioned challenges have implications for the hospitality industry in Ghana. Mensah (2023) has this to say when it comes to the hospitality industry in Accra:

Within the hotel sector, the areas of concern for the environment include recycling of waste, waste management, clean air, energy and water conservation, environmental health, maintenance of permits such as building permits, compliance with legislation, purchasing policy and environmental education. Ghana's nascent and growing tourism industry

has experienced steady growth in hotels, but it is not exactly known how these hotels are embracing the concept of environmental management, within the context of sustainable tourism development (p.2).

At the GPSC Africa Regional Workshop in Abidjan in 2018 (14-16 May), Mr Muhammed Adjei Sowah, the Mayor of Accra, identified many key challenges of urbanisation in Ghana. A few are listed below:

- i. Inadequate policy provisions to facilitate the mobilisation of capital resources for city-level infrastructure projects
- ii. High cost in matching up collection services with the rate of waste generation due to the increasing population.
- iii. There is a deficit of 1.7 million urban housing units annually, leading to the proliferation of uncontrolled informal structures in open spaces in built-up areas.
- iv. & Kumasi, for example.
- v. On air quality in the urban areas, the mayor lists the following
  - Deteriorating air quality, especially along major transport corridors and industrial enclaves
  - High GHG emissions create heat islands; that is, people moving from hot weather areas to colder areas.
- vi. There is a weak research linkage between industry and academia.

The above constitute some of the major challenges that urban dwellers face in Ghana.

### **Lifestyle Choices of Urban Dwellers in Ghana**

The lifestyle choices of urban dwellers in Ghana can be said to be very worrisome, and it is pertinent to list or mention some of them here:

- i. Conversion of toilets in houses into rooms for the purpose of giving them out for rent, contrary to building regulations in the country.
- ii. Open defecations, particularly along the beaches. In most cases, people defecate into black polythene bags and dump them in open gutters.

- iii. There is, from time to time, desilting of gutters through communal labour, but the sand and the other materials are left uncollected till the next rain takes them back into the gutters.
- iv. There is a huge patronage of used consumables such as fridges, car engines and other industrial machinery from Europe and America, which have the potential to emit chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) into the atmosphere. Edjekumhene and Cobson Coldbold (2011) report that there has been a significant rise in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Ghana, and this has put the nation into the net-emitter of GHG bracket.
- v. Constant importation of over-age cars into the country despite a penalty for that. The characteristics of such vehicles are the release of heavy fumes from their exhaust pipes to pollute the air (carbon emissions).
- vi. Some have connected their waste pipes to public gutters, and at times, one can see faecal materials dropping into gutters, giving a bad odour in the nearby vicinity. A disturbing phenomenon of this practice is that some of these are close to food vendors' spots.
- vii. Activities of some religious groups, particularly some of the Pentecostal-charismatic Christians who have made some of the few forested areas in the cities their prayer camps and other religious activities, directly destroy plants and animals in these ecosystems.

Obviously, the above practices are detrimental to a healthy environment and must be addressed to ensure a sustainable, healthy life in our urban areas.

## **DISCUSSION**

The analysis has pointed out that concepts such as environmental education, sustainable lifestyle choices, and the built environment can be seen as conscious and innovative attempts by scientists, environmentalists, and other scholars to help mitigate the negative impacts emanating from humans' attempts to make life more comfortable in urban centres. The foregoing has also made it clear that the issues of environmental education, sustainable lifestyle choices, and most importantly, the built environment, which has been identified as the dominant source of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, are crucial and, as such, need more attention in a developing country like Ghana. Obviously, problems such as not conforming to laid down

measures to ensure proper city lay outs, proper ventilation in building, proper waste disposal system, avoidance of urban sprawl, etc. will definitely pose a great challenge to a developing country such as Ghana, which is struggling to develop its education sector, deal with her health sector, solve huge accommodation and general infrastructural deficits in the face of inadequate economic and human resources. Confronting these mounting problems squarely will surely be daunting.

The following will serve to illustrate the magnitude of the problem confronting Ghana. I happened to meet two top officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at a workshop in Cape Coast in 2023. EPA is the institution mandated in Ghana to be responsible for ensuring that the country's environmental laws are strictly followed. Both presented the government's policy and guidelines on how environmental issues should be handled. Their presentations were interesting because, in theory (on paper), the country appears to have everything needed to maintain environmental health. However, in practice, the opposite is observed. I approached them during the lunch break and asked why we did not see what they were telling us. They admitted the challenge and expressed their frustration by saying that they were under-resourced by the central government to carry out their mandate. One of them said:

My brother, every year our budgetary allocations are not enough, and even what we are allocated is not fully given to us. He continued, would you believe that even we have to fuel our cars by ourselves to attend this workshop? (personal communication, 2023).

This situation obviously does not augur well for the country and thus calls for resolution.

## **The Way Forward**

In the following paragraphs, I talk about some of the roles or contributions that both urban studies and policy decision-makers in the country can make in addressing the existential challenges I have been discussing.

1. Environmental Education, as discussed earlier, has to do with the process of equipping the individual or members of a society with the necessary knowledge, tools and skills to minimise the damage that results from their interactions with their environment. A sustainable lifestyle is also about the kind of living that aims at reducing the exploitation

of natural resources. Thus, it is about adopting a lifestyle that encourages people to minimise their use of natural resources with the view to reducing the damage of these interactions to the environment in order not to put the lives of both the current and future generations in jeopardy.

However, despite several reports and policies on urban administration and governance systems in Ghana, urban administration and governance have been weak in Ghana. Not even the current Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies have been able to prove equal to the task. Yankson and Bertrand (2012, p.29) capture this thus:

This has compounded the problem of poor urban households in their attempt to access adequate and decent accommodation in the cities. A significant portion of the urban poor population lives largely in makeshift, unauthorised and unsafe housing, with the attendant health and other related problems.

This is where inputs from urban studies become imperative. The key aim of every educational institution is to serve the community in which it is established. What this implies is that Departments of Urban Studies should engage in more research to identify the problems at stake, particularly the new dynamics that urbanisation has assumed, which are impacting either directly or indirectly on the environment. The findings of such studies must be disseminated, particularly their harmful effects on human health.

- One of the core areas of urban studies is to expose people to the need to reduce the levels of consumption and the mainstream ways of purchasing and using products, including food and energy, with the view to maintaining the health of the environment. Therefore, with the right methodology coupled with the appropriate curriculum, Departments of Urban Studies should be able to come out with appropriate measures to address or minimise the effects of the various problems associated with urbanisation and its impact on the environment. Some of such measures that the curriculum should take cognisance of may include:
  - i. Making people understand the direct correlation between the environment and lifestyle choices
  - ii. blending theory with practice to get the full benefits of the study

- iii. Encouraging the planting of trees as a form of landscaping around private houses, worship centres, tourist destinations and other public places

The landscaping below is what I am talking about.



Fig. 10. Shoprite Mall at the West Hill area in Accra (photographed by the author, 2024).



Fig. 11. Author's own residence at Elmina in the Central Region of Ghana (photographed by the author, 2024).

- iv. Encourage the use of energy-saving bulbs and gadgets in the homes, worship centres and public buildings, etc.
- v. Constantly review the curriculum to confront the realities on the ground.
- vi. Sharing of research findings with community members

- vii. Understanding the concepts of responsible/sustainable/green/ethical consumption.
- viii. Reflecting on the importance of the effective use of natural and manufactured resources, and the minimisation of waste and pollution.
- ix. Increasing self-awareness of alternative consumption patterns
- x. ensuring that the people understand and appreciate the use of biodegradable materials or materials that can be easily recycled.
- xi. Leveraging on indigenous knowledge. At times, the input from indigenous people may be helpful since empirical research has shown that they are capable of living in harmony with their environment. Although they are mostly found in rural communities, some of their ecological values may be tapped into today's ways of addressing environmental problems (see Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014).
- xii. Growing Urban centres in Ghana need to have a generative impact on rural development to support rural life (Adjei Sower, 2018).
- xiii. internalising indicators for achieving the relevant Sustainable Development Goals in their local economies in urban areas in Ghana (Adjei Sower, 2018).
- xiv. Registering and acquiring building permits takes a longer time in Ghana. This encourages people to take the laws on building regulations into their own hands to corrupt and manipulate the system.

Policy decision-makers can also intervene through the following:

- Providing awards for the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, such as 'the cleanest city award', to serve as an incentive or motivation for others to emulate.
- ensuring adequate funding for departments of urban studies to assist them in regularly reviewing their curriculum to confront the challenges of the time.
- facilitating constant interactions in the form of retreats or workshops between departments of Urban studies and key administrators of Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies (Architects and Building Inspectors of the Assemblies, heads of Urban Roads and Sanitary Inspectors of the Assemblies) to update governments on changes in urban planning and development.

Other key actors that should not be left out in this interaction are the Ministry of Works and Housing and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA officials, in particular, must be compelled by the authorities to work in accordance with their profession.

- There must be a constant linkage between academia and industry, particularly the hospitality industry, to improve their facilities to modern standards. This has the potential to attract more tourists into the country, a practice that can earn the country some foreign exchange and also boost the local economy.

Furthermore, the government's policy of discouraging the importation of used goods that have the potential to worsen the greenhouse gas situation in the country should be implemented to the letter.

It is for these reasons that in this address, I have been advocating a continuous engagement with the issue of environmental education and sustainable lifestyle choices in Urban Development [Studies] discourse. This should happen till the desired outcomes, such as a better understanding of the close relationship between the concept of environmental education and sustainable lifestyle choices, are achieved.

Again, this continuous engagement should include how to explore more ways of living sustainable lifestyles, which will eventually have less destructive impact on the environment. I am also advocating that with proper methodologies and planning, environmental education and sustainable lifestyle choices discourse can inform policy decision-makers in city and urban planning initiatives in our modern societies and in Ghana in particular. Some of the ways of achieving this goal are for policy decision-makers to remove the barriers that hinder living a sustainable lifestyle. For instance, the regime for land registration and issuance of building permits should be re-examined and streamlined to prevent prospective land developers from illegal development in urban areas. Moreover, the Government should give serious attention to its affordable housing policy to improve decent accommodation in the urban centres to manage slum development.

## **Conclusion**

The discussions in this paper have been on the issue of Environmental Education, Sustainable Lifestyle Choices and the built environment. The concentration has not only been on what these concepts stand for and the attendant problems connected with them, but also on the complexities associated with these concepts and how to deal with them in a developing nation like Ghana. In summary, I propose the application of intelligent construction ideas like smart lighting, energy-efficient systems and sustainable water management techniques, etc. What can be emphasised at this concluding stage is that all the points raised in this paper will be a mirage if we fail to address any of them, especially education. And just as the Kenyan Nobel Peace Laureate, Maathai Wandari, posited, ‘You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them’ (Maathai 2011). This implies that there is a need for continuous education for the citizenry to understand and appreciate the simple fact that there is a direct correlation between lifestyle choices and environmental protection and conservation. Once we lose sight of this, all our efforts will be in vain.

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