

# **CHARCOAL BURNING IN THE KINTAMPO DISTRICTS: POLICIES, ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOOD ISSUES**



**WORKSHOP HELD AT AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT, KINTAMPO  
NORTH DISTRICT**

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**DECENTRALISED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RESEARCH**

# **CHARCOAL BURNING IN THE KINTAMPO DISTRICTS: POLICIES, ENVIRONMENT AND LIVELIHOOD ISSUES**

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## DISCUSSION ON DEAR PRESENTATIONS

**Theresa Oppong** (Kintampo North District Assembly): I want to know if through your research you have been able to identify the number of years it takes the coppices to mature into full-grown trees that can be cut for charcoal.

**Kanton Tontie**: As I have earlier on said, the study is on going and it is too early for me to make an authoritative statement. However, through our discussions with the farmers and charcoal burners it is between 10-15 years but we don't want to speculate.

**Emmanuel Yeboah** (District Forest Officer, Kintampo): I agree with the presentation by DEAR Project but I want some regulations on the charcoal production so that the trees can be maintained and sustained for posterity. In forestry terms if we have about 1 acre square of land with sparsely populated trees, where you cannot count about 5 trees we say the place is deforested. In areas like this we encourage afforestation. We also have to control the number of trees cut in a year because beyond a certain limit the land cannot sustain itself, which implies we are in crises. What we have to acknowledge is the act that there is pressure on all resources including land. Due to this pressure on the land, we don't wait for the trees to mature fully as it used to be in the past before cutting them for charcoal burning. It is a well-known fact that charcoal burners destroy the environment. They cause bush fires to the forestland. It is also a known fact that they cut trees along riverbanks. Meanwhile the regulation stipulates that no activity should be performed at least within 50 metres radius of all water bodies. The rules are there but people don't abide by them. They cut trees along the riverbanks as well as cut trees, which are not supposed to be cut.

**Nana Kwabena Ababio** (Non Formal Education Division Kintampo and Chief's Linguist, New Longoro): I want to agree with the forestry officer on some form of control on the way trees are cut for charcoal production. I also think that there should be some form of control on the way the trees are cut for charcoal. I also think that there should be some consultation and collaboration between staff of the Agriculture and Forestry departments to find some local tree species for planting.

**Nana Benson Osae** (Office of Administrator of Stool Lands, Kintampo): During the presentations it was mentioned that chiefs ban charcoal production in their areas. This is so because the charcoal burners don't pay the charcoal tribute to the chiefs. Whatever levy they pay goes to the District Administration and the chiefs are left out. Again, charcoal production destroys the environment because at the spots where charcoal has been burnt, no crop can be grown there.

**Fati Donkor**, (charcoal burner, Weila): I want to comment on the man who said that crops do not do well where charcoal has been burnt. It is not true. I have planted vegetables on my farm and the yield from the charcoal burning spots far outweighs the yield from the non-charcoal burning spots. For about two years now I continue to harvest from the

crops on the spots where charcoal was burnt but the crops in the other areas are dead long ago.

**Emmanuel Bampoe**, (Ministry Of Agriculture, Kintampo): I want to explain that we have two eyes and need a third eye in order to see well. The local people have knowledge and skills but they don't consider them. These pieces of information that the researchers have given us were gathered from the same local people but when it is well packaged and presented to them it gives them the third eye and they understand things better. I also want explain something to the woman who said crops grow better on charcoal burning spots than other areas, that when a place is burnt, more ashes are produced which contains a lot of potash. However, it also kills some nutrients in the soil, e.g., nitrogen. Furthermore, I also want to know from the researchers if they have been researching into the nutrients the coppices take. This is because there will be no leaves to drop on the ground to add manure to the soil.

**Nana Kwabena Ababio**: I want to know if the DEAR project is in support of charcoal production or against charcoal production.

**Kojo Amanor**: We are not against charcoal burning.

**Abraham Manu** (Charcoal burner, Weila): It is not true that charcoal burners don't pay tributes to the chiefs. In the New Longoro area, when the revenue collectors come they come with two receipts, one from the administration of stool lands and the other from the chiefs. Where does the money go?

**E. K. Fugah** (National Youth Council, Kintampo): I support the District Forestry officer on some regulations on charcoal burning. We can also establish woodlots to serve as a source of raw material for the business. For instance, in my village near Akuse area in the Eastern Region, the people have planted Cassia and Neem trees, which they cut to burn charcoal.

**Kojo Amanor**: I want to come in here because I have done some research on tree planting in the Eastern Region. There is one problem with what you are saying. If as you are suggesting that the planting of Cassia as occurs in the Eastern Region should be a model for Kintampo district, then why is Kintampo which uses natural trees the leading charcoal production area in Ghana, and the Eastern Region where they plant a lot of fast growing fuelwood species - and which is right next door to Accra, the main charcoal market - not the leading producer? One thing is that the trees here make better quality charcoal than Cassia. Cassia is also a problem in the Eastern Region. It grows quickly and all over the place and it is difficult to control. The Neem tree also has the same effect and often results in poor crop yields where it dominates.

**Adams Lamini**, (Charcoal burner, New Longoro): I am a charcoal burner from New Longoro. I want to plead that what the big men say about charcoal burners is not true, that is not how we are. We demand that before they think of banning charcoal they should speak to us. We have knowledge and techniques we use in cutting trees. We are aware that

when we cut all the trees on the land it will be a problem for us in future. We know the size and type of tree to cut for charcoal. I am saddened that mostly when people talking about destruction of the environment it is only charcoal burners who are mentioned. Timber producers are not mentioned. The technique that we use in cutting the tree enable it to coppice and grow so that we can come in about 5 years to harvest them again.

**Sampson Addae** (Charcoal burner, Dawadawa): I want to react to Nana's accusation that charcoal burners do not want the chiefs to see them burning charcoal because they do not want to pay tributes to them. At Dawadawa where I come from, the chief has nominated some people to collect such tributes from the burners. However the collectors do not account for all the monies collected to the chief. For each tractor load of charcoal we pay ₺100,000.00. When the chief hears that the tractors have gone to the bush to carry charcoal and he does not receive the money he imposes a ban on charcoal production. That is why from time to time you hear that there is a ban on charcoal production at Dawadawa and some other times the ban is lifted. It is not true charcoal producers have refused to pay tribute – it is rather the chief's own people who fail to pass on the money collected.

**Comment** (unidentified speaker): According to the District Forestry Officer, in recent times due to pressure on the land, we don't wait for the trees to grow to full maturity before cutting them for charcoal. A chief has also mentioned that charcoal burning destroys the environment. The fact is that charcoal burning does not destroy the environment. There is a weed called "Acheampong", you can bear me witness that as at 1983, this weed was not found in Mo land. It is God who created the land who brought us this weed. He also told us to use trees to burn charcoal to get money because as at 1983, there was no charcoal burning on the land. God saw that this business will help us and prevent us from stealing so I do not think he will allow it to destroy the environment.

## **CHARCOAL BURNERS ARE LIKE ORPHANS: NOBODY REPRESENTS THEIR INTERESTS**

Mathew Kewa  
Chairman,  
Kintampo Charcoal Burners' Association (Mo Area)

In every family, if you are orphaned at a very tender age, you become disadvantaged. This is because when family members gather they will not invite you the orphan. You are represented at the family meeting by your father who brings to you the proceedings from the meeting. But the orphan has nobody to represent them. In most cases occupational groups have leaders to represent them at governmental level and put forward their interests. But this is what we, charcoal burners, lack. This makes us disadvantaged.

Most of time, we are associated with all the negative aspects of the environment. This includes causing bush fire in the forest and cutting trees along riverbanks, as claimed by the Forestry Officer. This is all due to the fact that we do not have leaders who will speak for us at the national decision-making level. I have said, and will continue to say, that I will continue to burn charcoal until my last breath because it has helped me tremendously.

When charcoal burning was first introduced to Moland by the Sissala people from the Upper West Region of Ghana, our chiefs accepted them wholeheartedly and gave them large tracks of land to burn charcoal. During this period no native of Mo was involved in charcoal burning. We were yam farmers. In those days men did not even cultivate groundnut, which was considered for women farmers. Men who cultivated groundnuts were insulted as lazy people. Some even lost their wives. Mo men were not able to take good care of their children, as they should have done, because they could not get sufficient income from yam farming. This has affected the development of Moland because we do not have scholars amongst us.

We began to realise that whenever these Sissala charcoal burners returned from Kumasi after the sale of their charcoal they brought big cassette recorders, jeans, big boots and other personal belongings. Some even stated flirting with our wives. We the indigenes were wallowing in poverty because our yams were being bought at low prices. At Asantekwa, another guy and I were the first people to associate ourselves with the Sissala people and enter the charcoal business. Although we saw the business to be very tedious work we were bent on doing it, because we are strong men. I started charcoal burning as far back as 1975.

Charcoal burning helped my finances a lot. It also boosted my farming activities as I was able to invest some of the profits in farming. I was able to take good care of my family. As I stand here, two of my children have completed secondary school and the third one will complete next year. All



this was made possible through my charcoal burning activities. People from my village will bear me witness.

You see, I am a yam farmer. By the time I was supposed to pay my children's school fees, it would not be harvest time for my yams and I would not have money in hand. With the introduction of charcoal burning, money comes quickly and you can target your operations to get money at any time. So it enables me to pay their fees regularly.

Even if the children came for their fees when I was broke I would just go to the charcoal buyers and get a loan. Sometimes, if I have not packed the wood for burning, I would tell the sellers that the charcoal it is on fire and they would loan me some money to do what I wanted to do. Thus charcoal burning relieved my need for money to meet obligations to my children.

When I heard the information that there was going to be a ban on charcoal burning, I was taken aback. I asked myself am I going back to the past. How will I be able to take good care of my family? It was very serious. Fortunately, the ban did not materialise.

In the past, young men from Moland were sent to prisons every now and then because they had stolen people's property, such as farm produce, fowls, sheep and goats. However, with the introduction of charcoal burning, this has drastically reduced, if it has not been eradicated. This is because the young men are engaged in some income generation activities. I have seen that people in Moland have benefited a lot from charcoal burning. As I said, earlier, during the time of the Sissala people, the chiefs took some tribute from them. Now that we the Mo dominate charcoal burning the chiefs cannot take tribute from us, because we are not migrants. The chiefs became embittered and decreed that charcoal burning should be banned because it may lead to famine, since the youth are abandoning farming to cut trees and burn charcoal. This allegation is not true. Those who are starving now were starving before the introduction of charcoal burning.

The Forestry Officer has mentioned here that charcoal burners cut trees along riverbanks. I want to plead with him that it is not true. In my village Asantekwa, I challenge any of you here to follow me to go round the banks of our river to see if we will find charcoal burning spots there. What you will see is saw dust along the river banks. This is because the chiefs have given these places to chain saw operators for timber production. In the last meeting that we the Charcoal Burners' Association had before this meeting, at the Dear Centre in Kintampo on May 17, this issue cropped up. I asked the Assemblyman of New Longoro, Mr. Ayimadu to come to Asantekwa so that I take him to see the riverbank. He is here and can attest to what he saw. As I speak now, there are six chainsaw operators working there, and it is the chiefs who have given them the lands.

If charcoal burners are accused of destroying the environment I will not accept this because it is not true. In truth, charcoal burning and farming are bedfellows – they accompany each other. If you say charcoal burning destroys the environment, then farming should also be banned. Even

when you go to the Ashanti Region where they do not produce charcoal, farmers cut the trees from the forests before the land can be prepared for farming. When you come to our environment here yam farmers kill the trees. They even remove the stumps so that the roots do not compete with the yams for water to enable them to get good yields. When you compare the environment where charcoal has been burnt to a yam farm, you will see that yam farming destroys the environment more than charcoal burning does. This is because charcoal burners select the size and type of trees to cut but the yam farmer does not select, he kills all the trees.

I feel very sad because whenever an official is sent from Accra or Sunyani to come and look at these things. He only comes and looks at documents at Kintampo and goes back. Meanwhile, there are officials here who have never been to the bush before. How can they write something meaningful about charcoal burners? The officials do not go to the grassroots, the source of information but rather rely on secondary information.

The trees we cut coppice more quickly than the burnt ones and those that have been cut by timber contractors. I want to know why people do not talk about timber contractors but rather charcoal burners as destroyers of the environment. This is because we do not have a father to fight for us.

Concerning grass burning, we have been accused of being the source of the problem. This is also not true. In charcoal burning, if you do not get enough grass to cover the charcoal you cannot produce good charcoal. We are seriously affected during the dry season by bushfires, because we have to travel long distances to cut grass and carry to where you want to burn the charcoal. Why should I burn grass, which I need for carrying out my work?

I want to conclude by saying that we are part of the problem but we are not the only people whose activities destroy the environment.

## DISCUSSIONS ON MATHEW KEWA'S PRESENTATION

**Emmanuel Yeboah:** I just want to add to what he has said. We are not here to destroy someone's business. In my submission, I never said there should be a ban on charcoal production. The same way if you decide to ban forestry service I will fight back. However, we must be sincere with ourselves because there are cases I have sent to court concerning charcoal burners who have cut shea nut trees. If you are not involved in such practices that does not mean others are not. Wherever there are two people, there is one Judas among them. It was one of your own colleagues who got angry and came to report to us that shea is the "cocoa" in our part of the world here but some people were harvesting it in commercial quantities. We must therefore be objective and find how we can do things for the betterment of all of us. The presenter stated that he has been burning charcoal for the past 30 years. I want to ask him if he is getting as many trees today as he was getting back in 1975?

**Nana Sie Kotoku III** (Chief, New Longoro): Charcoal burning destroys the environment and the youth are lazy and do not like farming. This will eventually create famine in our communities because the number of farmers will reduce which will result in a reduction in food production. We gave land to the Sissala people because we also have to eat. We are old and cannot work. Ask them (the youth) if they take care for us? The youth should care for the elders who are the custodians of the trees. They have forgotten that they will also grow old one day. We virtually survive on what we get from the Sissala people and those we lease the land to.

**Mathew Kewa:** Frankly speaking, the quantity of trees I used to get is not what I get today. Actually, I do not have a particular piece of land specified for charcoal production. I burn my charcoal on my old farmland after I have harvested my yam.

**Anthony Manu** (New Longoro Area Council): Now that this point has been well established. Let us look at how we are going to solve the problem of the decreasing quantity of the trees because when the last tree dies the last man dies.

**Michael Tawiah** (Charcoal burner, Mansie): What I want to say here is that, in my opinion since 1975, the date that was mentioned, Ghana's population was not the 18 million as we have today. As the population increases, we must know that we not going to get things the way they were during the 1970s.

**E.K. Fugah:** I do not think the question asked by Mr Manu is what has been answered. He says that as population increases there is pressure on trees. That is why we are saying that we should preserve the forest and also plant more trees. That is why the government has drawn up these policies to be implemented. There have been donor funds in the country to ensure that whatever we are destroying should be replaced. What my friend said was that, you are a charcoal burner, everyday you cut trees how can we replace what you have been cutting so that you will get trees

to cut all the time? We are all here to share ideas as to how your job can flourish.

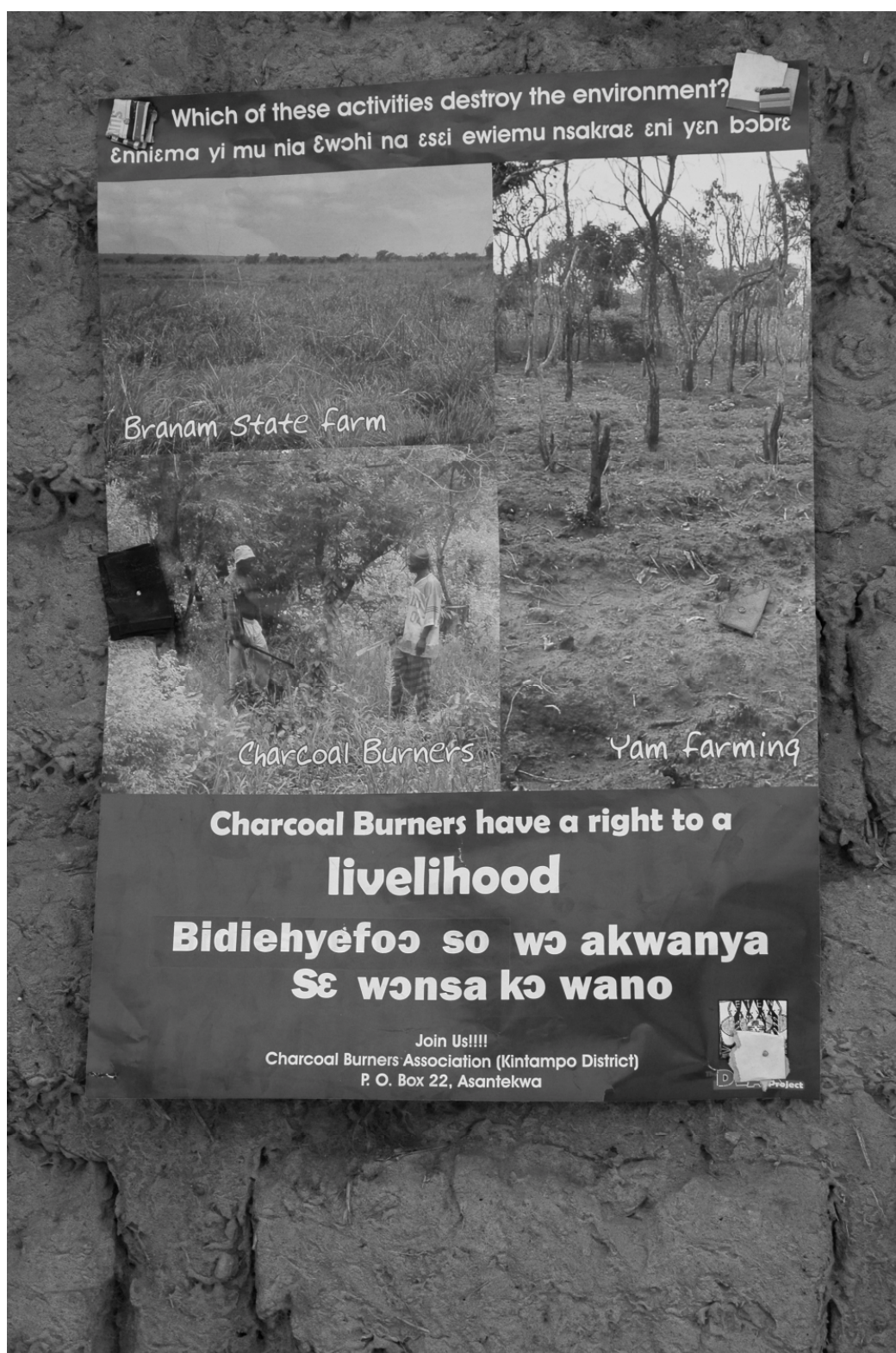


Figure 1 The Charcoal burners' poster

**Samuel Fogor** (Charcoal burner, Sabule): When we are talking about charcoal burners in our area what we should understand is that charcoal burners are not different from farmers and vice versa. I am specifically talking about Moland because that is where I come from. All yam farmers have charcoal money invested in their yam farm so charcoal burners are not different from farmers. Personally, I am a charcoal burner as well as a farmer. My farm is even larger than someone who only farms because I get extra income to support my farming activities. Whenever we talk of the environmental destruction what we should consider is that not only charcoal burners are involved in this. This is because in Kintampo, here, all the farmers use tractors to plough the land. Some farms are more than 10 acres; let us ask ourselves if there are trees on such farms? Again, I want us to analyse this. I am a charcoal burner, give me 2 acres and give a farmer also the same size of land and let us see whose land will be destroyed faster. When you cultivate yam you need to kill all trees on the farm that are above my height. Meanwhile a charcoal burner will not cut such trees because it will be of no use. If we want to maintain the volume of trees to protect our environment then it should involve the whole population because there are other activities that destroy the environment and not charcoal alone.

**Maxwell Kude** (displaying Charcoal Burners' Poster): During Nkrumah's, time he wanted us to get enough food to eat so he imported tractors and established a state farm at Branam, which is just close to us here. Although the project has been abandoned several years ago there is not a single tree on the vast land. The picture at the top left corner shows the Branam state farm, which is now full of wild grass since the trees were stumped years ago. The picture below it shows an area at Asantekwa where the trees have been cut for charcoal and after a few years the trees have re-sprouted and could be cut for charcoal again. The third picture on the right shows an area where yam was cultivated and you can see for yourselves the cutting of trees.

**J.B. Tuoyire** (District Coordinating Director, Kintampo North): I want to make a point that is nobody is saying that it is only charcoal burners who destroy the environment. There are many factors that contribute to the degradation of the environment. Now our focus today is on charcoal burners, assuming charcoal burners destroy the environment by 1%, what are they doing to restore the 1% that they are destroying? We will also ask yam farmers what they are doing to restore the percentage that they are destroying. We are not putting the whole blame on only charcoal burners so there is no need for comparison.

**Nana Benson Osae:** The chief stated that charcoal burners destroy the environment more than farmers. Again he mentioned that when the Sissala people were around, the chiefs benefited financially from them. I want to pose this question to the charcoal burners that in their time too do the chiefs get some financial benefits from their activities? What they should be reminded of is that today they are matured and very strong and can burn charcoal to take good care of their children. When they are old and cannot burn charcoal what will their children do to take care of them since they are destroying the trees today?

**Comment:** My response goes to answer the woman who wanted to know the number of years it takes the coppices to mature. When we harvest the trees, there are some types, which will take up to 10 years to mature and ready to be harvested again.

**Malik** (Charcoal burner, Asantekwa): In response to Nana's question as to what our children will use to take care of us when we are old? My opinion is that I did not get the opportunity to go to school that is why I am burning charcoal. If I am able to get money from charcoal to educate my children properly to a higher level, they will be able to secure better jobs and will thereby not take to charcoal burning.

**Nana Kwabena Ababio:** Whatever we are discussing here is a waste of time because it looks as if the charcoal burners have already made up their minds. There should be no further discussions on this because in the presentation of the chairman of the Charcoal Burners' Association, he categorically stated that he will never stop charcoal burning. What I think we should be doing is, as one contributor suggested, finding how to replace the trees that are being cut.

**Anthony Adamgye** (National Disaster Management Organisation): I think whatever we are doing here is geared towards how to preserve the environment. In the forest reserves the Forest Service has been mandated to give timber merchants concessions. Why don't we do the same thing to charcoal burners? By so doing they can be monitored. Today when chainsaw operators cut timber it is illegal, but the timber contractors cut timber, which is considered legal. I think when charcoal burners are also given concessions; the technical people will tell which tree is matured to be cut for charcoal production. I think this will solve all these problems because charcoal burners must also live and have rights to livelihood.

**M. Mahama** (Environmental Health Officer, Kintampo North): Thank you very much. You see if a Sissala man should bring a technology to a Mo man, I think it is in the right direction because they are one and the same people. Environmental issues have their political, economic, social and even cultural implications and you cannot draw a straight line between one and the other. They are interdependent. You cannot talk of one without talking of the other. Charcoal burners are not being accused here. You see, in law we have got first degree felony, second degree felony, and misdemeanour. What I want charcoal burners to know is that they are also part of the environmental destruction like yam farmers, chainsaw operators, cassava farmers, Fulani herdsman and many more. We the consumers are also part of the problem, because if the producers produce their charcoal and we the consumers do not patronise their products they will stop. This makes the problem of environmental degradation a cycle, a vicious cycle. We have a right to life today the same way as our children and grandchildren also have a right to the natural resources today, and the same way as our future generations will also have a right to the natural resources. And trees are renewable natural resources. They are not like gold. When you take them from the ground you can put another back. Trees are renewable. So as you go about your charcoal burning, there must be a way out so that there can be regeneration. Regeneration can be natural or artificial. There are major stakeholders, charcoal

burners, yam farmers and what have you. All of us gathered here are stakeholders so we are friends to the environment as well as enemies. Everybody has the potential of contributing towards the sustenance of the environment for the present generation as well as future generations. We have only singled out charcoal burners to know that the others fall within first degree or second degree felony.

**Francis Korankye** (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Sunyani): It looks as if everyone has spoken and everybody has made us aware of whatever he/she wants us to know. Well, yesterday I went to the Internet and I logged on to Google search and I saw an article written by Professor Amanor on this same issue of charcoal production in Brong Ahafo. It was about who had the right to control trees. Right now it all boils down to how we should regulate these activities. It boils down to management of how they should go about their activities in order not to deplete the environment. This is all that I have to chip in.

**Harris Venkumini**, (Radio and Social Commentator, Kintampo): We have heard a lot. But what has come out clearly in our deliberations here is that the charcoal business has become a big economic venture. If we are to sustain such a venture, then we have to look back and find how we can organise ourselves into a viable co-operative setup, so that we can go into woodlots farming, or like a previous contributor said, we can go into either natural or artificial regeneration. The most important thing is forming an association so that we can fight for ourselves.

**Kanton Tontie**: From some few comments made here, it looks as if nothing is being done to manage the resources that charcoal burners or farmers extract from the environment. Earlier on, I said our research is still on going and we have been coming out with best methods of harvesting trees from the environment. Whatever we are doing is a result of the users. If we interact with them and something comes up then we jointly set up the experiment together. As at now we can tell you that we have certain tree species that have fewer buds on their stem and the way they are distributed on the stem too. For example, if you have a species like sasu, we have two types of sasu the broad leaves and the small leaves. The broad leaves have very few buds so if you cut such a tree you will have to leave sufficient height to make use of the few buds that it has. Currently, we are looking at the relationship between the size of the tree and the coppicing rate. We are also looking at ways of managing the coppices. So it is not like nothing is being done. We are doing this in collaboration with the charcoal burners and the farmers.

**Kojo Amanor**: I want to raise a few questions I think have come out of the discussions. The first one is people have been talking still about environmental crisis so the question is what evidence do you have that there is environmental crisis in Kintampo and how are you monitoring that crisis and the level of deforestation? Because if you don't have any way of monitoring the environment, and you say there is a crisis, there the danger that you can do a lot of harm than good and you can alienate a lot of people from the villages. A good example of this is the timber industry here in Ghana and the management of timber trees by the forestry

service. Twenty years ago, farmers were able to cut timber trees on their farms with chainsaw. If you wanted to cut a tree to make mortars you would go to the District Assembly and you could get a permit to cut that tree. The Forestry Service took trees out of the hands of the District Assembly. They said that the Districts were mismanaging trees... They banned chainsaws and they said that farmers did not know how to manage trees on their lands. So 20 years down the line, what is the success of that policy? The first thing is that most of the timber produced for the local market is produced illegally. They are produced by chainsaws. When you go to Accra and Kumasi most of the timber is chainsaw timbers. All these are supposed to be illegal yet this is the timber mostly in the domestic sector. This is because the timber industry, the owners of concessions, is mainly interested in producing for the export market. Farmers don't like to preserve timber trees on their farms now because they don't earn anything from it. Now the timber industry is in serious crisis. There was a research report by the USAID, which estimates that there is about less than 10 years of timber left in Ghana and there is a complete crisis in the timber industry. So the Forestry Service have got control over the timber industry but by getting that control, a lot of people have been alienated from it and the timber industry is in serious problem nowadays. Now we are not saying that there should not be management or there should not be controls. But the question is, at which level should the controls be established? How are the controls to be established - on the basis of information or on the basis of no information? We can centralise the control with the Forestry Service, but that will be difficult because they are only managing the forest reserves and not the off-reserve areas. They even have enough problems managing the forest reserves with the resources they have. Or we could put the control with the District Assembly. We can make the communities of charcoal burners and farmers also to be responsible to give them a role in managing it at the community level. When it comes to the cultural and economic issues that my friend here raised, we can also decide that the community does not know anything so we should force things on them because they only know how to degrade the environment. That is we can see the communities as not having any knowledge and we have to show them what to do. Or we can start from the basis that the communities have some knowledge - after all the trees are still there. Look at the pictures of the yam farms - there are plenty of trees. Let's try and build up what is positive rather than starting from what is negative. Those are the thoughts I would like you to think about.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CHARCOAL IN KINTAMPO NORTH AND SOUTH DISTRICTS**

Charcoal Burners Association (Kintampo) and  
Decentralised Environmental Action Research (DEAR) Project

- 1) Charcoal Burners have a right to a livelihood. This right should not be tampered with, unless there is tangible evidence that charcoal burning destroys the land. The necessary scientific research to merit the idea that charcoal should be banned has not been established.
- 2) Most charcoal burners are farmers and most charcoal originates from farms and farm clearance. It is impossible to separate the effects of both activities and pinpoint charcoal as the main cause of environmental destruction.
- 3) Most of the tree species used for charcoal burning are plentiful on farms and fallows. They regenerate rapidly when cut. They are not scarce.
- 4) Making plantations for charcoal burning is not a good practice for charcoal burners in the Kintampo districts because the indigenous species are numerous and would be cleared to make way for plantations of single species. Many of the indigenous species are fast growing, coppice quickly, good for charcoal and have other important uses. They usually regenerate quicker than plantations grow.
- 5) Current byelaws banning charcoals are not consistent, transparent or democratic. Chiefs frequently introduce bans against charcoal so that they can collect revenues from charcoal burners. In settlements in which they get large revenues from charcoal they allow burning, while in other areas they introduce bans until charcoal burners raise monies for them. The same chief can have different policies in different settlements in which in some areas charcoal is permitted while in others it is banned. There should be a consistent policy for all settlements. There should be a meeting between charcoal burners, traditional authorities and the district assembly to create more transparent and fair regulations for charcoal.
- 6) Before policies are made on charcoal the opinions of charcoal burners and farming communities should be sought. Policy makers should be informed about charcoal burning rather than making policies on assumptions and distorted views about charcoal destroying the environment. There should be educational programmes to defuse the idea that charcoal burning destroys the environment
- 7) Charcoal burners and farmers should come together to develop local conventions and best practices for charcoal management in their localities, rather than other authorities imposing regulations upon them.
- 8) There should be more research on regeneration to help charcoal burners to develop best practices for the management and cutting of trees.

## **WORKING GROUP REPORTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Following the reading of the Recommendations of Charcoal Burners the statements were distributed to the district administrative staff, and representatives from the Assembly and Area Councils, and chiefs. These three groups were organised into working groups to deliberate on the statements and present their findings back to the charcoal burners. These are presented below.

### **REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVES FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**

1. We are not agitating for a ban on charcoal production but rather for control over production.
2. Charcoal burning has not been singled out as the only degradation practice. There must be a holistic approach to the issue.
3. Charcoal burners should provide proof that most of the tree species used for charcoal are plentiful and provide evidence for the different tree species.
4. We reject the suggestion that the plantation for charcoal burning is not good practice.
5. Major stakeholders in Kintampo are not aware of any byelaws banning charcoal production
6. There should be more educative programmes to defuse the idea that charcoal burning is the ONLY practice that degrades the environment.
7. All is not well with charcoal burning (as is evident from points 7 and 8 in the statement) and stakeholders should come together to formulate acceptable policies to manage charcoal burning.

### **REPORT FROM REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CHIEFS**

1. Charcoal burners should know that traditional rulers/chiefs (Nananom) own the land.
2. Therefore, the charcoal burners should give Nananom royalties.
3. Charcoal burners whether natives or stranger should consult traditional rulers/authorities.
4. Charcoal burners should leave the young trees to be matured for regeneration.
5. Charcoal burners should not fell trees near river/streams.

### **DISCUSSION:**

**Abraham Manu (New Longoro Area Council):** After the speech of the chairman of the Charcoal Burners' Association Nana mentioned that both farmers and charcoal burners are Mo people. I want to know if the chiefs collect tribute from a Mo man who resides in Moland and who does not

burn charcoal but cultivates yam? Or it is only the charcoal burners they collect this tribute from?

**Nana Benson Osae:** I want to state that charcoal and timber trees, sand and all other resources belong to the chiefs. They are the custodians. Whatever activity you conduct on the land you must see them. If you go to the bush and you don't come back, it is the chiefs who will be responsible to organise a search party to find you. So whatever activity you do on the land you will have to seek their approval. However, yam farmers need not pay tributes to the chiefs.

**Nana Kwabena Ababio:** When we talk of charcoal burning there are classifications. Some are professionals who produce charcoal on large scale. These are the people we are talking about and not those who produce on subsistence basis. We are not saying these people should see Nana. We are talking about those who load a full Kia truck every week to Accra.

**Emmanuel Yeboah :** Please permit me to clarify certain issues. Whenever there is a mistake, we have to correct it because the information we carry away talks a lot. Concerning trees, the agency that has been given the mandate is the Forestry Service. All money collections are supposed to be their responsibility. Whether it is in the forest reserve or outside the forest reserve it is under the jurisdiction of the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Services Division (FSD) is the custodian of the land and it holds it in trust for the people. So under normal circumstances we should grant permit for charcoal burning so that the person who exploits trees on the land pays the levy to us. We will then disburse the funds to the Administrator of Stool Lands for Nananom to receive their share.

But we have a problem. We have not called for charcoal burning to be reinstated. Therefore if we see that someone is burning charcoal and we give that person a permit, then we are aiding that fellow to continue with what he is doing. We have therefore suggested to our superiors and we are looking at ways of meeting the charcoal burners in the various districts. I have talked to the District Chief Executive (DCE) in this district and those who matter in this case, so that we can sit down and plan what to do. What we should be aware of is that in the near future if there is a policy and we award permits for every tree you cut, even outside the forest, it is the Forestry Commission that is responsible for collecting the levy.

The fact is that because we are facing this problem that is why we have recoiled into ourselves. We also believe in customary practices. The chiefs are the custodians of the land. When you go to the bush and you don't come back, he is responsible to organise a search party to find you. So whatever activity you perform on the land, ranging from timber cutting, charcoal burning and what have you, you will have to see the chief and his elders and give them some drinks. That is not a tribute. It also does not mean the chief has sold the land to you. People create the impression that the little money that the chief collected from you implies that he has sold the trees to you. That money is some form of compensation or a social

responsibility that you have performed. This is because so far as you have come to stay in the town you will patronise all the social amenities in the town. That money is a form of drinks given to the chiefs. Even when you are a native it is recommended that you greet the chiefs with some small "drink". It does not apply to only settlers. Even when you go to cut trees on someone's old farm, you will have to compensate the farmer in some way because if he had cut that tree during the time he was clearing the land you wouldn't have gotten the trees to cut.

What we have to know is that all resources are important. If it is not a timber tree and it is a non-timber tree we term them separately as non-timber forest products. Firewood is part of the non-timber forest product, as is Raffia palm, and on all these things we collect revenue. It is because of the problem of fire. that is why we don't have these things here.

**Kojo Amanor:** You said that all trees belong to the Forestry Service. Does this mean that oil palms also belong to the Forestry Service and if you have them on your land you don't have the right to sell them or their products.

**Emmanuel Yeboah:** Belong to us does not mean it is for us; we hold it in trust for the chiefs.

**Comment:** If charcoal burning destroys the environment, then farming also destroys the environment the same way as timber. Now this tax will not affect the farmer. We have all seen the importance that charcoal production brings to the people especially the natives. Why do Nananom want to increase their tax obligations so that life becomes unbearable for the people, which may lead to them deserting the town?

**Mathew Kewa:** I want to respond to his question. The chiefs have told us that if you are a native and a farmer and you harvest the trees from your farm to burn charcoal they don't have a problem with you. However if you are a native and you are a commercial charcoal burner they are asking to give them some tribute.

**Nana Kwasi Gyimah II** (Chief, New Longoro): What I want to say is what my brother here has just said. We have never demanded tributes from natives of Mo since the time of our forefathers. It is the commercial people that we are asking to give us something small.

## **REPORT FROM ASSEMBLY PERSONS AND AREA COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

1. There is no attempt to ban charcoal burning in the district. Revenue accruing from charcoal is encouraging, as stated in the recommendations.
2. Some of the charcoal burners fell economic trees such as Shea nut trees. They also fell trees on the outskirts of the villages, destroying wind breaks.
3. Even though the tree species are plentiful, there is still the need to replace felled trees.
4. Certain places are already suffering from desertification so there is the need to make plantations at such places.
5. The District Assembly (DA) byelaws stipulate that farming and charcoal burning along the banks of rivers/streams should be 50m away.
6. Monies collected from charcoal burning by Nananom are used for pouring libation so that misfortune does not befall the charcoal burners as they go about their duties.
7. The District Assembly invites recognised charcoal burners' associations to meetings, e.g. Kintampo Charcoal Burners Association. I therefore want to advise my brothers here if they are not registered, then they should do so as early as possible so that the D.A can invite them when they want to pass resolutions.

### **DISCUSSION**

**Mathew Kewa:** I want to comment on the point 3, that charcoal burners cut shea nut trees. It is true that some of us are guilty of this offence. Sometime ago, I went to the bush and discovered that someone had cut this shea tree and packed them for charcoal making. I came and reported the case to the then Assemblyman, we also informed the chief. The boys were called and there was an attempt to confiscate the charcoal. Finally, the chiefs collected a goat from the boys to purify the land because it was a taboo to cut those trees. Meanwhile, they released the charcoal to the boys. The charcoal should have been confiscated since they had offended the land, but this was not done. This has set a bad precedent. If I know that the charcoal I will get from cutting shea nut trees will be worth more than a goat, then I will go ahead and cut shea trees because I will still make a profit. The punishment is not a deterrent. I want to plead with Nananom that now that they know us, they should refer such people to us for sanctioning.

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