

Barnabas Apom

## CONSULTING FOR THE WATER SECTOR

ACCRA



### Who are you and what is your background?

I am Barnabas Apom, consultant for the water sector at GNBCC, the Ghana Netherlands Business and Culture Council, and CEO of RESEARCHLIME Ltd, Survey data collectors.

I have been involved as a focal person in a lot of stakeholder involvement for projects in the port and the water sector. For GNBCC I also work with a lot of water organisations in Ghana, like Unicef and WaterAid. I have a broad overview of the water sector: the rural stakeholders, the districts, the businesses, the rural communities and district assemblies, mostly bottom-up.

### How is GNBCC involved with the Tema port?

GNBCC is a membership organization and we work to resolve our member's challenges. Quite a lot of them are involved in export, logistics, and taking care of container shipments, for instance. Often they are stationed in the port or in the so-called free zones around the port. A free zone is an area that the government has established for Foreign Organizations to operate as if they are operating in international environment. GNBCC helps our members to engage with stakeholders that are involved in the port sector, which is a major sector in Ghana. We use our network - for example the Dutch Embassy, the companies, the district assemblies and the government - to bring the interests of the stakeholders to the forefront of decision makers at a national level. GNBCC links the businesses and find the challenges that they are facing; and then tries to bring the stakeholders and the decision makers together to address these challenges.

### How is the work of GNBCC related to the port expansion?

The expansion of the port will open up all kinds of business. There will be a lot more involvement of our membership companies in the port interactions. It might also attract more companies from The Netherlands to work in Ghana. GNBCC is basically facilitating business between the Netherlands and Ghana. Once the new port opens and business is started, we will have a lot more events. So it will definitely affect GNBCC's work.

### What is a Sustainable Port to you?

I think for a port to be sustainable, there are two main points. Firstly, it has to take into

account the needs of all the stakeholders involved. Their consent, and their grievances. If the port is benefitting, and the majority of the people like communities and smaller companies are not involved in any way, it will lead to violence and destruction later on. Even the fishes in the port should be considered, because they are also going to be affected.

Secondly, sustainability is about ownership. The local people have to feel that they are all part of this expansion of the port. The indigenous should feel that it belongs to them; that is necessary for the sustainability of any project. I have a lot of examples of water points and water stations that are abandoned because the local people don't feel that it belongs to them. That is why ownership is very important for sustainability.

### What do you think the Tema port looks like in 20 years?

Apart from the site physically increasing, it will bring a lot of activities and interaction in the port. Organizations coming in for example from Burkina Faso and Benin are not able to reach the port, because we do not have the facilities, like parking areas for the trucks. In the next 20 to 30 years the port is going to open up not only for Ghana but also the whole of West Africa, because is it an easy entry to this part of the continent.

The port will bring in a lot of new and modern activities. The vice president is aiming to make everything paperless and automated at the port. While this is good it also has consequences. Many local people living around the port are manual workers. So we have to bring alternative livelihood

*Image right top:  
Mr. Apom with his  
team in the field.*

*Image right bottom:  
Mr. Apom inspecting  
an innovative water  
treatment system  
developed in Ghana.*

activities, think about how we can create other jobs for them.

### **What do you hope Tema port looks like in 20 years?**

I hope the politicians will have the political will to construct new and safe infrastructure to connect the West African countries, like train lines, roads, parking lots etcetera. Otherwise, with a lot of cars and cargo on the roads, it will cause many accidents. I hope the expansion will bring more prosperity to the country.

Another thing that I wish quite much is that most of the things involved in the production and operation of the new port will be established within our country. Now, most organizations bring goods and materials in from outside, but that is not a sustainable way to do things. It should come from our own country, so jobs can be created for our people. The new port will need many new containers, why don't we create a container factory in Ghana?

For me this links back to the inclusiveness of the port, we should get local people involved and create jobs for them. People from the villages whose fishes are no more out there, because of pollution or otherwise. Our country has jumped through development, and many have no capacity in or access to new technologies. We just put them loose. So we have to do things that keeps everyone busy and makes them feel they are part of it. Imagine that the people of Sakumono lagoon, Tema New Town and Prampram could work in factories connected to port development. Get the port linked to their existence, their life. That is the very key to sustainability.

