

Philip Seshie

## COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

### TEMA CHURCH VILLAGE



*Image above:  
The community  
committee.*

We meet Mr. Philip Seshie at Community 5, Church Village just before his weekly Committee meeting starts. He leads us around the community.

#### **Who are you and what is your connection to the community here?**

I am the chairman of the local Community Committee 'Centro Mosque Zongo Association'. We try to coordinate some communal issues for people living in Tema Community 5, Church Village. Our community consists of about 220 structures: churches, some small shops and living quarters. The buildings are mainly made out of wood, and each house can contain man, wife and 2 to 4 children. Some structures have electricity and we have a water tank and tap, where people can get clean drinking water. More than 600 people are living here.

We meet with the full community once every month, to discuss our issues. We want to stay in Tema; but to rent a house here is very expensive. Therefore the Committee works hard to make life for the people better here, to develop the place. So for example, we have gone to all houses for a contribution to build a toilet block. The first 3 toilets are almost completed now. They will be for women only. The men come later, as 3 toilets for over 600 people are not enough. We need more.

#### **How does the new port development affect your community?**

I don't think the new port will affect our community; there is quite a distance between here and where it is coming (about two kilometres). The expansion is closer to the mouth of the lagoon, that's not close to us. But the new port will need many new

workers, and some of us work there already. Other workers will come in from outside, and they too might want to live in our community because this is cheaper living. But I don't know where they are going to live: the closer you live to the lagoon, the more you get flooded.

#### **How do the floods affect your community?**

Well, when the water comes, it is dirty and full of silt because there has never been any dredging here. I know because I was born here, and in all my life, that is over 40 years, I've never seen any dredging of the lagoon. When I was a teenager in the 1980's we would fish and swim in the lagoon. But now that's impossible because of all the silt. And with the flooding all this silt pollutes our community. We then take refuge in the churches. The National Disaster Funds provided mosquito nets and the churches gave mattresses and blankets, so the people have a place to sleep. There are some promises for more help, but we cannot wait for the government. So with the Committee we organize the communal labour, for example to clean up after a flood.

#### **What do you hope this place will look like in 20 year's time?**

As a community we very much hope the lagoon will be dredged. It needs dredging; the channel is too small. And there are only three openings, very small ones, so it is difficult for the water to enter the sea. After the bigger floods it takes sometimes two to three weeks for the water to go away. So I hope the lagoon will have dredging to open more channels, and will have more openings to the sea. And I wish for more toilets.