

Edem Agortey

TAXI DRIVER

TEMA CHURCH VILLAGE



*Image above:
Mr. Edem Agortey.*

We meet Mr. Edem Agortey at the edge of the Sakumono lagoon, on a Sunday afternoon at the small amenities shop of his wife.

What do you do for a living and where do you live?

I am a taxi owner and drive my own taxi. I live in Tema, next to the Sakumono Lagoon in Community 5, Church Village. I live here now for 6 years with my family, but originally we came from the Volta Delta region. In my taxi, I take customers from around this area, from Tema city and from the port to places around here and in Accra.

How will the new port development affect your work?

I can't tell now. I do not know this while they are still building it. First the port expansion has to be finished and then we can see what happens. But it will be good for my business if more workers in the port will come to this area. It gives me more work from the port, because I also drive customers from Tema port to the airport in Accra.

You live so close to the lagoon, do you use the water of the lagoon for fishing or go there to swim?

No, I do not go to the water, because I can't swim. So I do not like it and it's too dangerous. Also you cannot drink the water of the lagoon, it's very dirty. But yes, you can eat the fish. Only it is not us that fish in the lagoon; that is for the people from the other side, from the Sakumono Village. Every year, around June, the lagoon floods. Sometimes more, sometimes less. In 2015, on June 3rd, the water came very high, while in 2016 and 2017 it also came, but less high.

What impact does the flooding of the lagoon have on your life?

Each year we have to leave our houses during the floods, and live at the higher grounds of the church, or go to the school area. Sometimes for a few days to a week, but in 2015 it was for more than two weeks. We try to take as many things with us as we can. But if the floods come in the night, you don't know and can lose many things, like my wife did from her store. Afterwards we have to clean a lot and for a long time because the water brings lots of dirt and animals. All our houses are covered in mud and dirt from the lagoon. We then do communal labour to clean up the area; this is organized by our local committee.

What do you hope this place will look like in 20 years time?

I hope that after the port is finished, maybe they will look at the way water of the lagoon is blocked from the sea. Because now the water can't flow into the sea, it floods back into the lagoon. The openings are very small and there are only two or three. Maybe they can make them bigger and more openings, so the water can leave the lagoon. I hope that will prevent the floods from the lagoon.