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2020 BUDGET STATEMENT:

ANY INVESTMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND THE THE SDGS?

INTRODUCTION

The World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Risks Report ranks biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse as one of the top five threats humanity will face over the next ten years. Despite this, Ghana's economy still depends on extractive industries that cause great damage to biodiversity and ecosystems. Government must recognize and account for the grave impacts that biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse will have on Ghana's economy by steering it away from extractive industries and towards green technologies and development options that nurture rather than destroy nature.

To assess the extent that Ghana's government may be pursuing green and sustainable development options, an assessment was done of the Ghana government's 2020 Budget Statement and Economic Policy 'Consolidating the gains of growth, jobs and prosperity for all'. The analysis found a depressing lack of green thinking with virtually zero budget for ecosystem services and action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is surprising, given that the 2019 Budget assessment – 'Big Footprint, No

Investment for Environmental Sustainability' – of government's 2019 budget gave specific pointers on key programme areas where government could integrate green actions into the budget, yet these have been totally ignored.

This lack of emphasis on protecting and sustaining natural forests, biodiversity, and ecosystem services runs throughout the budget. Instead it promotes a business-as-usual approach even though the evidence is clear: we cannot continue on that path. It is completely unsustainable.

The analysis also looked at sectors of the environment and the economy that interlink and impact on one another, and examined if protection and sustainable use of ecosystem services and natural resources are sufficiently budgeted for. The areas examined were: **forests, biodiversity and ecosystems; water resources; climate change; oil, gas and energy production; agriculture; commitments to achieving the SDGs; and special funds related to the environment.** The analysis showed that raw materials and fresh water are the most important categories of natural resources for government's economic development priorities.

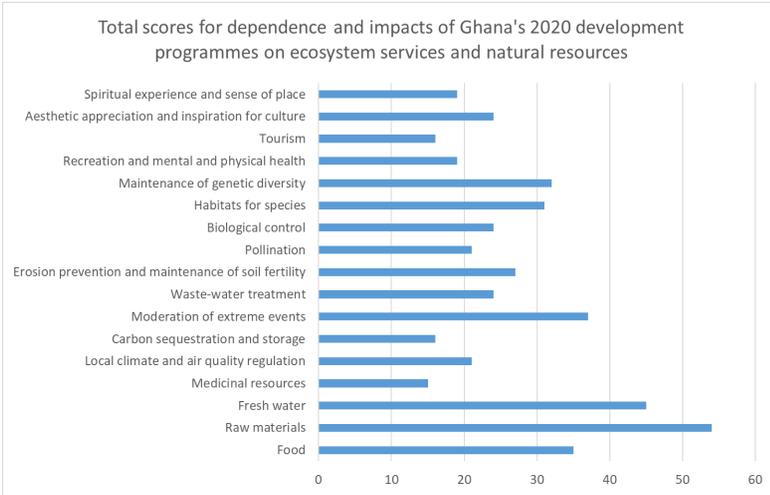
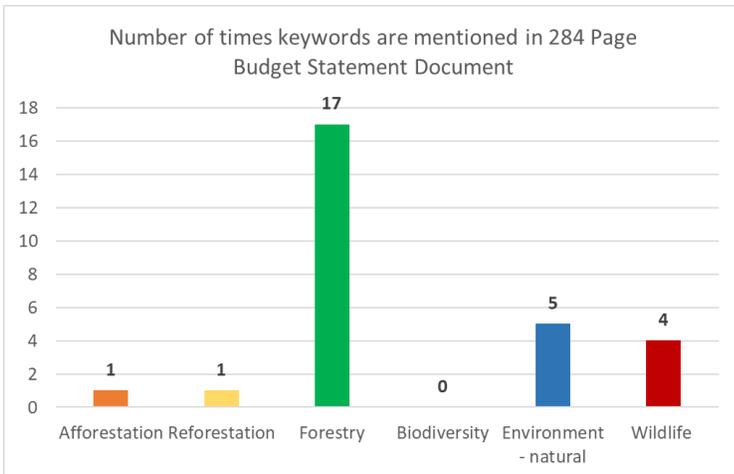


Figure 1. Totals the scores for Ecosystem Services that need Prioritizing to secure sustainable development goals.

FORESTS, BIODIVERSITY, AND ECOSYSTEMS

Forests, biodiversity and ecosystems are critical to Ghana’s economy and to rural communities’ livelihoods and sustenance, yet there is worryingly little investment or action for their protection and sustainable use. The only clear budgetary commitments linked to forests, biodiversity and ecosystems are the GHC240 million for the National Afforestation Programme, and the GHC15.5 million for Operation Vanguard’s work throughout all Ghana’s forests, while GIADEC by comparison has GHC32.3 million for 2020. The lack of attention to forests, biodiversity and ecosystems is further illustrated by analysing how often the 284-page budget document mentions these key words: biodiversity is not mentioned even once, and forests are referred to mainly in terms of their legal exploitation rather than their protection or sustainable management.



Water Resources

Clean water is important for various economic sectors, and people also need it to maintain their health, which is why the 2019 budget assessment advised that protection of Ghana's upstream watersheds is crucial. It will not be sustainable to implement new water service projects if the water sources they depend on are not protected. This advice however has again been ignored. It appears the only budget allocated for water resources is as part of the GHC43.2 million for 'Water and Sanitation', implying it is only for water provision services rather than upstream watershed and river protection. Galamsey and potential bauxite mining together pose a massive threat to clean water resources, as already seen with the widespread water pollution caused by illegal mining, but still they go on. And the budget allocated for fighting Galamsey, as noted above, is very limited, especially when the size of Operation Vanguard's task is so huge. **No bauxite mining should be permitted in the vicinity of watersheds or potable water sources. To ensure no damage to Ghana's headwaters, rivers, and the forests that harbour them, Ghana needs a dedicated national action plan aimed specifically at protecting these critical areas.**

AGRICULTURE

The government's vision for agriculture is of modernisation with a focus on increased inputs including fertilisers and agrochemicals along with subsidies to promote their use. Many countries are now turning against widespread use of chemicals as they realise the hazards for people and biodiversity, as well as for farming itself. By far the biggest budget allocation for the Ministry of Food and Agriculture is on the flagship programme Planting for Food and Jobs (GHC400 million) that is based on conventional farming practices. There does not appear to be any budget devoted to alternative sustainable agriculture. **Ghana's vision for agriculture should focus on quality food, instead of only value and quantity, by integrating indigenous techniques with agroecology and agroforestry innovations that produce healthy diverse foods, reduce farmer poverty, promote wellbeing and community self-reliance, create jobs, help rural communities adapt to climate change, and work with nature to control pests.** Community based adaptation to climate change must also be supported.

COMMITMENTS TO ACHIEVING THE SDGS

The SDGs are supposed to be mainstreamed throughout the budget and, while there are several mentions of them, the only major focus is on solar energy and a Green Fund to promote it by raising US\$100 million in two years, but it is not clear how this will be achieved and no funds have been allocated to it in the budget. The SDGs must be firmly integrated at all levels of government and across all policy areas so that they provide the basis for government's budget and programmes. Other than that, government's development agenda will continue damaging the environment and natural resources that Ghanaians depends on.

SPECIAL FUNDS RELATED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

The assessment of government's 2019 budget pointed to the fact that Ghana's five special funds – the Natural Environment Fund, Renewable Energy Fund, Ghana Green Fund, Forest Plantation Development Fund, and Mineral Development Fund – that support environmental conservation and climate change-related interventions were given no budgetary allocations in 2019, and the situation remains the same in 2020. These funds must be adequately resourced so they can contribute meaningfully to sustainable natural resource management and benefit sharing. The Plastic Waste Recycling Fund has been financed with around GHC3 million for 2020, but we urge the government to also focus on reducing single use plastics by banning and replacing them. Alternatives exist and we must use them.

There is some investment for the institutions responsible for managing and regulating Ghana's natural resources, **but more critical is that political interference in their work must be eliminated to increase public trust through good governance.**

To conclude, it is clear that we need a paradigm shift in the way we manage natural resources in Ghana. It is therefore of utmost importance that ecosystems services, forests, biodiversity, green development, and the SDGs are mainstreamed through the various manifestos that will emerge later in 2020 so Ghanaians can have the opportunity to choose a green development path for Ghana instead of the dangerous path the nation is pursuing at the moment.

For any further communications

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