

Impacting lives in Northern Ghana: United Nations' contributions

Solar Irrigation to the rescue of farmers

Idrissu Aboubakar, is in his early 40s. He has eight children and two wives. He has been farming since 2001. For 13 years, he traveled about 12km to his farm located in Pashiguni. He was also using a petrol-powered machine to irrigate his crops. During this period, he and his colleagues farmed only once a year and in the rainy season. His farm size was about a



Idrissu Aboubakar showing off his cabbage farm

quarter acre. Each time the machine broke down, they travelled some 75Km to Tamale, the capital city of Northern Region to have it repaired. Coupled with the cost of fueling the machine, they found farming very unprofitable.

In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Energy Commission of Ghana, intervened by providing 76 solar panels to support thirty-seven farmers in the area to irrigate their farms in a more productive way. Today, Iddrisu Aboubakar tells us he is "a proud farmer in Tamalgu, I can take care of my family. I have my own house and I have bought a motorbike."



Idrissu Aboubakar examining the solar panels on his farm

During a recent field visit to UN project sites, Aboubakar was enthused and excited to show us his farm. He led the team to his much bigger 2.5acre size farm riding his motorbike through the shrubs and waters along the pathway. He has planted a variety of vegetables and fruits. The solar panels and the pump were all in good condition and he demonstrated to us how they use the pumps for irrigation, beaming anxiously.

Like several farmers in Nakpanduri, Datoyili and Fooshegu benefiting from UNDP's solar-powered irrigation pumps, Aboubakar can now boast of regular income as farmers.



Idrissu Aboubakar on his motorbike

Protecting the Tampion Dam

Tampion is a town located in the Savelugu district of the Northern region of Ghana. It is about 30km from Tamale, the capital city. Half of this distance is a stretch of red dusty road. The people of Tampion are hardworking farmers. Their major source of water is the Tampion river. They use this river for all their domestic needs, including drinking, washing and bathing.

Unpredictable rain patterns caused by climate change could adversely affect this major source of water for the people of Tampion. To preserve around and protect the water from pollution therefore, the UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), is supporting the community to plant trees along the banks of the river to serve as buffer zone.



A resident of Tampion fetches water from the dam



Aisha drinking water from the dam

A visit to the site by the UN Communication Group revealed the efficacy of the river and the impact of UNDP's intervention. We met several residents of the community, including Aisha, who had gathered along the river banks to wash their clothing. Some came to fetch water from the river for use at home. Others stopped by on their way home to quench their thirst. According to Aisha, "we drink the water and do everything with this water", suggesting to us that, if this water should dry up, famine is eminent.



Women washing by the dam

For many, their dependence on this river may be farfetched. But for the people of Tampion, any intervention to save the river from drying up is a huge support not only for them but for the generations yet unborn. Small as it may sound, the UNDP's intervention is obviously a welcoming gesture.