

The Role of Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic Churches in the Socio-Economic Development of Ghana

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Abstract

Neo-propheticism have become a very popular strand of Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. They have been recognized for the emphasis on the doctrine of prosperity messages which aims at improving the social and economic status of their adherents. In similar vein, neo-Prophetic churches also tends to exhibit the prosperity gospel by playing roles in shaping the communities or rather societies in which they are established. The church has always had impacts on their adherents and also the societies which they find themselves. This explains the number of institutions and social services that are linked to the church when it comes to helping in the socio-economic development of the societies they found themselves. This paper seeks to highlight the doctrine of prosperity gospel as associated with neo-Propheticism and its role on the socio-economic development in Kumasi. A descriptive research design approach was used. and This research design heavily relied on secondary data gathered through literature review. The study concludes that churches are playing a significant role the socio-economic development in Ghana. The study recommends that the Ghanaian government should put in place policies that will help churches to promote their operations. The study did not cover all churches hence the findings must be viewed in context and the conclusions were derived from the evidence gathered

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Introduction

Over the past few years, neo-Propheticism in Ghana has gained much popularity. It has been recognized as a strand of Pentecostalism which took hold of the country by “exploiting the severe economic hardships of the late 1990s”.² According to Quayesi-Amakye, the term neo-Propheticism is used to well describe a phenomenon that has reoccurred in Ghana’s religious scene characterized with the practices of spiritual healing and deliverance, practices of spiritual direction, the successful use of the media in going about their ministry and the emphasis on the prosperity gospel.³ Some of such churches in Ghana include; International God’s Way Church, Action Chapel International, Power Cathedral International. Accordingly, in an assortment of ways, neo-Propheticism shows sensitivity by responding to both spiritual and physical needs of the people.

In general terms, churches have continued to play a significant role by helping to develop and shape the society. This has included in infrastructure and other economic activities such as schools, hospitals, credit unions, and companies etc., set up by the churches in Ghana and around the world to help boost development. In diverse ways, neo-Propheticism beliefs and practices are remaking the face of Christianity in Ghana, have been recognized as playing crucial roles in affecting human life. Neo-prophetic churches continue to grow daily and have a significant impact on the Ghanaian society. This impact and growth are mostly associated with their prophetic theology and concept of prosperity gospel (health and wealth message).

Due to their position in society, churches today have multiplied all over the world and are globalizing more than cooperatives. The economic meltdown has actually provided a hub for the creation of more churches in Ghana to engage in the gospel of prosperity. However, as these churches grow, a glimmer of hope appears for the many Ghanaians who have become destitute because of the challenging economic climate in the country. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the role of neo-Propheticism on the socio-economic development in Kumasi. The study is carried out in Kumasi because of the recognized number of neo-prophetic/charismatic churches present in the city.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Neo-Propheticism/Charismaticism

Neo-propheticism known as the new strand of Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatics emerged into Ghana’s religious scene since the late 1990s.⁴ The term “neo-propheticism” was coined by Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo to represent this

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² E.K.E Antwi, “Church’s response to the impact of Religious Fundamentalism on the Christian communities in West Africa with Ghana as Case study” in *Challenges to Church’s mission in Africa*, eds. Fabbriro Meroni, Arance Editrice, 2020, 197.

³ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Propheticism in Ghana’s New Prophetic Churches,” *Journal of European Theological Association* 35, (2015): 163.

⁴ Daniel Aryeh, “Hermeneutics of re-enacting biblical text(s) and concept(s) in the history of propheticism in Ghana’s Christianity: A case study of the ministry of Agabus and prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 43, no.1 (2017): 7

strand of neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic movement that involved prophecy, healing and miracles.¹ According to Quayesi-Amakye, the term neo-Propheticism is used to well describe a phenomenon that has reoccurred in Ghana's religious scene.² This type of movement is referred to as prophetic and Pentecostal/Charismatic because of the emphases of the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit in their ministry, particularly prophecy. Neo-propheticism in Ghana is further characterized with the practices of spiritual healing and deliverance, practices of spiritual direction, the successful use of the media in going about their ministry and the emphasis on the prosperity gospel. One important aspect this neo-prophetic strand in Neo-Pentecostalism has succeeded is the conscious involvement in the social and economic development of its members and the society in general, by seeking to provide both spiritual and physical solutions to issues recognized as factors hindering development in general.

Prosperity Gospel

Prosperity gospel is the Christian conviction and concept which holds that God provides for his people. It expresses that believers have the privilege to God's blessing through the steadfast contribution to the work of God. Urquhart states that God causes his children to prosper when they live by the principles of the kingdom and exercise their faith in God's goodness. It likewise implies that God's bountiful goodness will benefit individuals who are disciplined, determined and believes.³ The prosperity gospel teaches that believers have a claim to health and money, and that they can gain these blessings by making confessions backed by faith and diligently sowing seeds and offerings.⁴

The teachings of neo-Prophetic churches are highlighted on "success" and "good wealth" in all aspect of the life of the believer.⁵ This teaching is recognized as health and wealth gospel (prosperity gospel). They emphasize that, it is the will of God to prosper and enjoy a wealthy and healthy life. Therefore, the Christian must be successful in all his doings and prosper financially because of his relationship with God. For this reason any problem encountered by the individual that impedes one's progress is attributed to witchcraft and evil forces.⁶ Quayesi-Amakye points out that the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic movement has always been characterized by the concept of prosperity and is associated to the reasons for the upsurge of neo-Propheticism in Ghana.⁷ These churches are of the view that the prophets are identified as people having supernatural ability to foresee the cause of financial difficulties as well as the plans and works of the devil against the believer. In this theology, the prophet gives spiritual guidance or direction to the believer with the aim of fighting back the evil forces and destroying the negative works of the devil in the life of the believer.

Prosperity Gospel and Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic Churches in Ghana

To highlight the relationship between prosperity gospel and development, it is important to emphasize its context and mode of operation. Although many neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches stress prosperity preaching, some puts much emphasis on it than others. Generally, neo-Prophetic/Charismatics are characterized by similar teachings and beliefs including repentance, salvation, baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, deliverance, healing and miracles.⁸

Nonetheless, these days, the teachings on prosperity have received much attention making it the regular and very essential part of neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches. In prophetic theology, the biblical reference mostly used in support of prosperity gospel is 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth" (KJV).⁹

The doctrine surrounding the gospel of prosperity is the regular "give and you shall receive" which is mostly emphasized. In this way, people give tithes, offerings, seeds and donations to the churches believing to receive prosperity in return. Most churches use these donations to also contribute to the socio-economic development of their communities and societies. Clearly most projects and social intervention programs implemented by the churches are done by these donations with the aim of also giving to receive or generally prosper as a church.

¹ Cephas Omenyo & Abamfo Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space: A case of neo-Propheticism in Ghana", *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, no.162 (2006): 55.

² Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "Propheticism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches," *Journal of European Theological Association* 35, (2015): 163.

³ Benson Idahosa, *I choose to change*- Crowborough: Highland, (1987).

⁴ J. R. Stambaugh, "Pentecostalism as a Christian Mystical Tradition" *Anglican Theological Review* 102(2), (2020), 316.

⁵ Johnson Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu. "Anointing Through the Screen: Neo-Pentecostalism and Televised Christianity in Ghana". *Studies in World Christianity* 11, Issue 1 (2008), 13.

⁶ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "Prosperity and prophecy in African Pentecostalism" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* no. 2 (2011), 267.

⁷ Quayesi-Amakye. "Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism," 291-305.

⁸ Matthews Ojo, "Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Nigeria: Factors of Growth and Inherent Challenges," *The WATS Journal: An Online Journal from West Africa Theological Seminary*: Vol. 3 : No. 1 , Article 5. (2018), 86-87.

⁹ KJV 3 John 2

Development

Development can be assumed to take place in three naturally places overlapping and intertwining. These constitute economic, social and health. (Little 1995, 124). Since development affect a lot of things there is no definite definition for it. With this, a lot of people have tried to define it from various perspectives. According to Rodney development is where the individual level, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline,¹ responsibility and material well-being, the achievement of any of these aspects of personal development is very much tied in with the state of the society. Here development is seen as an improvement, well-being and progress of the people.² All the various definitions centered around education, health, social and economic. This is mostly achieved by creating the right environment for an enterprise by ensuring competitive markets, removing market rigidities, clarifying legal structures and providing infrastructure. For Iwe the features of development are where there is the existence of social security, the practice family planning, modernization of agriculture among others.³ With this, development geared towards progress, improvements, changes and general well-being by enhancing people's welfare.⁴

Economic development has to do with increased in material wellbeing, the provision of basic needs and equal or equity distribution of resources. Social development has to do with social integration. This is basically deduced from Maslow's psychology (1954) of human need. This implies that human need starts from low stage through to high stge. With these, socio-economic development is noted to be a social and economic development in a society. These are mostly achieved by the work of both the government and the members of the society at large. In other words, in order for a nation to achieve a socio-economic development, it is a joint work of the government and the citizens.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used the descriptive study approach, because it aimed at responding to what is/who, what, when, where, and how questions.⁵ It is usually context-specific as it describes the real-world settings of people to better understand social realities, processes, meaning, patterns and structural features.⁶ Primary and secondary data were used for the study. The secondary sources of data including books and research/academic articles were used to gather needed information for the work. Primary data were gathered through interviews.

A total of 100 well-structured questionnaires were distributed. Focus groups were used in the study with members of the community and members of the church as participants. The questionnaires contained both closed and open-ended questions. This interviewing method was chosen because it enabled the researcher to ask probing questions to learn more about the activities the church participated in and why. Data gathered were analyzed using the narrative analysis method which helped the researcher to analyze the information and experience shared by the informants thematically. The study is carried out in Kumasi because of the recognized number of neo-prophetic/charismatic churches present in the city

Study Location

From the 2010 population and housing census, the population of Kumasi Metropolis is 1,730,249 which represents 36.2% of the total population of Ashanti Region.⁷ It comprises of 826,479 males (47.8%) and 903,779 females (52.2%). The Metropolis covers a land area of 214.3 square kilometers, which is 0.9 percent of the region's land area of 24, 389 square kilometers.⁸ It is estimated that 84.5% persons in the Metropolis are Christians while 11.2% belong to the Islam religion. Persons with no religion form 3.1% of the population. Among the Christians, Pentecostals/Charismatics from a greater percentage of an estimated 36.8% while Catholics and Protestants from 13.1% and 17.6% respectively. In terms of male and female differentials, there is very little variation between the sexes. A large proportion of females (86.4%) and males (82.6%) are Christians. There are only slightly more males (11.8%) than females (10.7%) who are Muslims.⁹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the study, 64% were below the age of 40; 68% female; 24% were single; 46% were married; 24%were;

¹ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Tanzania: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972), 4.

² Offiong Offiong Asuquo, "Pentecostalism and Development: The Role and Prospects of Prosperity Gospel in the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria," *Predestinasi* 14, no. 1 (2020): 36 pp35- 40

³ N.S. Iwe, *Christianity, Culture and Colonialism in Africa* Calabar (Saesprint, 1979), 186

⁴ Asuquo, Offiong Offiong Asuquo, "Pentecostalism and Development: The Role and Prospects of Prosperity Gospel in the Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria," *Predestinasi* 14, no. 1 (2020): 37

⁵ Mark Risjord, Margaret Moloney and Sandra Dunbar, "Methodological triangulation in nursing research" *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 31(1): 2001, 40-59.

⁶ Uew Flick, Ernst von Kardoff and Ines Steinke, What is qualitative research? An introduction to the field. In Uew Flick, Ernst von Kardoff and Ines Steinke, (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2004, 3-11.

⁷ Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census. *District Analytical Report, Kumasi Metropolitan, October, 2014, x.*

⁸ Ghana Statistical Service, 19.

⁹ Ghana Statistical Service, 36.

18% single parents and 12% divorced. 8% had at least primary education; 10% ordinary level; 16% advanced level, 66% academic qualifications; 42% were formally employed. These findings suggest that the respondents are mostly females of a productive age, have at least a primary education, and less than 50% have secure sources of income. The level of unemployment amongst the respondents of 58% is a common in Ghana. The study revealed the following key contributions by the churches:

Education

Formal education was introduced in Ghana with the help of the missionaries. It is clear that most schools in Ghana were founded by religious groups. It is worthy to note that education is one of the main keys of spreading the gospel throughout the world. It seems that most religious denominations established schools in Ghana. The primary focus of literacy and numeracy aimed in developing people and spreading the gospel. There is no doubt that most schools in Ghana were established by these religious denominations. This way of spreading the gospel seems not limited to only the mainline churches but was a target of the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches too.

For instance, Christ Cosmopolitan Incorporated has basic school for members within and around its community. International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) has contributed a lot in the Ghanaian education. It is in this direction that set a up the Central University as the largest private Christian University in Ghana.¹ It has its origins in a short-term Pastoral training institute, which was started in October 1988 by ICGC. It was later incorporated, in June 1991 under the name, Central Bible College. In 1993, the name was changed again to Central Christian College. The College later upgraded its programs to the baccalaureate level, and in line with national aspirations, expanded its programs to include an integrated and practice-oriented business school, named Central Business School.² To reflect its new status as a liberal arts' tertiary institution, the university was re-christened Central University College in 1998. The National Accreditation Board has since accredited it as a tertiary Institution. It is co-educational with equal access for male and female enrolment. Central University has eight (8) faculties/schools, namely the Central Business School (CBS), the School of Architecture and Design (SADe), School of Graduate Studies (SGS), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Faculty of Law (FOL), School of Pharmacy (SOP), School of Engineering and Technology (SET) and the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS).³ In January 2016, the University College received the long-awaited Presidential Charter to become an autonomous and a fully-fledged university as Central University.

A lot of dreams are born in this university. In view of this, transformational leaders are trained to serve as a positive influence in the society through faith values. The mind is trained to be analytical and critical. Vocational skills are being impacted through the hands. Again, the integrity as part of the aims of the school help them to produce truthful and honest graduates for the society. it is clear that the university provide a holistic education to its students. This in the long term helps in the nation provision of education to the country. Again, it conforms with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by expending and providing quality education to people.

Healthcare

Aside the establishment of schools to support the educational system in the countries, the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches have done well when it comes to healthcare delivery in Ghana. Most of the churches have established hospitals to aid the healthcare delivery in the country. It is clear that the establishment of health facilities by the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches has contributed greatly to healthcare in Ghana for some time now. These health facilities established by Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches seek to provide healthcare at the lowest cost and even in exceptional cases, at no cost to the patient. They belief that health consists of the whole wellbeing of a person; these churches also provide avenues to heal people spiritually. Aside the establishment of these hospitals to aid the healthcare delivery in the county, they also do health promotion campaigns. Diseases like HIV/AIDS among others have been noted to hunting a lot of people and therefore there is the need to create the awareness for people to stay healthy. Again, health awareness on hygiene, exercises are done intermittently. Notwithstanding, donations are done for the other hospitals to add to the socio-economic development of the country. For example, recently, the International Central Gospel Church organized a health campaign in which the people were given free treatment by health specialists. Others were tested and diagnosed of certain hidden diseases whereas others were vaccinated. Education on family planning and the avoidance of different diseases was given thereby increasing the amount of vigorous and able-bodied people who are able to work, go to school and live healthy lives.

¹ See; <https://www.central.edu.gh/> Accessed, 20th November, 2021.

² Cf; <https://www.schoolsingh.com/pages/universities-in-ghana/central-university-college/central-university-college>. Accessed, 20th November, 2021.

³ See; "Update: National Accreditation Board flags non accreditation of Central University K'si Law Faculty." <https://www.mynewsgh.com/update-national-accreditation-board-flags-non-accreditation-of-central-university-ksi-law-faculty/> Accessed, 20th November, 2021.

Social Amenities

In recent times, Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches have contributed a lot when it comes to social amenities. It is in this direction that Acheampong emphasized on some of the important development of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in the provision of social services and other important socio-economic initiatives. According to Acheampong the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches in Ghana has taken advantage of and aligned itself to the government of Ghana's goal of socio-economic development.¹ This action taken by the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic has also helped transform the lives of numerous people in the country. In the understanding of the churches social cooperate responsibility have they engaged themselves in a lot of social amenities worth highlighting. They have taken a new direction in social development by registering their social service wings as foundations or aids. Taking the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) for instance, they have introduced "Central Aid" to help members.² This is basically aimed at providing educational scholarship scheme to provide financial assistance to needy children in pre-tertiary educational institutions in Ghana. It is in this direction that in 1996, they expanded the scope to include relief services, community development, advocacy and career guidance and counseling.³ There is no doubt that it has become one of the biggest and well-known NGOs, in the country in the contemporary times. The General Secretary of the church, Rev. Dr. Michael Perry Nii Osah Tettey, had indicated sometimes ago that it became the second largest scholarship scheme in 2019 trailing after the government own ones. of Ghana.⁴ This is funded basically by the ICGC with financial contributions from the church's head office, local and foreign assemblies of the church, congregations, and kind donations from members of the church.⁵

Aside the above, they have supported in many ways; thus, the provision of social interventions. During the expansion program of the Princess Marrie Louise Children Hospital in Ghana, they provided a financial assistance. Breast cancer screening program of Mamocare Ghana; renovation of a three-classroom block of the Akufful-Krodua Catholic Junior High School in the Central Region among others were done by the ICGC. Aside these, twenty water boreholes were done for some communities in the Ga West Municipal for over 12,000.⁶ It has been observed that this was in aid of improving cleaning drinking water among members of the communities. under the leadership of Apostle General Sam Korankye Ankrah, the Royal House Chapel has established "Compassion Ministry" to help people. The basic aim of tis wing in the Church is to transform the lives of the vulnerable, socially excluded and the less-privileged in society to give them hope for the future." This is regarded as preaching the message of hope to people as well as bringing comfort to people. Some of the programs meant for social cooperate responsibility of the church are; These are the Prisons Ministry, Community Outreach, Senior Citizens Ministry, School of Restoration, Scholarship Foundation, Feed the Hungry, and Hospital Ministry. It is in this view that medical services, food, clothes, and toiletries among others were provided for the Nsawam and Akuse Prisons both in the Eastern Region, and the Winneba Prison.⁷

Economics

One of the key areas of socio-economic development of the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches which cannot be left out is the economic contribution. In the large extent, it has been observed that the churches have opened schools, hospitals among other institutions. The schools and the hospitals built by the churches have employed a lot of people in the country. In view of this, it has reduced the unemployment rate in the country. The schools and hospitals owned by the churches also pay taxes to the country. Aside this, the employers within these institutions also pay their taxes which aid the economic growth of the country. Aside these, also, most of the churches have established offices from where administrative activities of the churches are organised. A few others also have specific offices assigned for the provision of special services such as counselling. These offices are often managed by professionals as well as laymen from the churches thus providing job opportunities for such people. Some of these offices have administrators, accountants, lawyers, planners among some professional. This avenue creates employment for the various individuals in the office and in the larger extent the pastors in the churches.

¹ Fredrick Acheampong, Pentecostals and politics in Ghana's fourth republic: from enclave to engagement. PhD dissertation, Victoria University of Wellington. (2018), 85.

² Central Aid, <http://centralaidgh.org/page/about>. Accessed 21st November, 2021.

³ Francis Benyah, "Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the Provision of Social Services in Ghana," *International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 38, no. 1 (2021): 4. pp16-30

⁴ interviewed on 4 July 2019, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

⁵ Benyah, "Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the Provision of Social Services in Ghana," *International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 38, no. 1 (2021): 4

⁶ Attiogbe, Charismatic churches and social development in Ghana: a case of international central gospel church. MTh dissertation, Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana. (2014)

⁷ Compassion Ministry, <http://royalhousechapel.org/compassion-ministry/#1453375563673-301b779c-f550>. Accessed 21st November, 2021.

Discussion

The socio-economic contribution of the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches in Ghana cannot be overemphasized. However, their contributions have caught a lot of eyes in the public which cannot be hidden either. This assertion has compelled a lot of scholars to contribute from different angles on the subject in question. On this foundation the study seeks to examine the socio-economic development of some Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches in Ghana. In answering the question of the socio-economic development of some Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches, most of the respondents highlighted on education, healthcare deliver, social amenities among others. For Emmanuel Owusu, “the Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches have established schools in Ghana which is helping the educational policy.”¹ This is in this view that Yaw Amponsah submitted, “for me Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches provide scholarship opportunities for some people” he added that “when I completed Senior High School, I had no hope of going to university because my single mother could not afford my fees. It was the ICGC who paid my school fees for me.”² Harriet Yeboah too it further by saying, “my father died in my early stage and it is my church who have been taking care of me till date.” With the above, there is no doubt that Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches are helping in the socio-economic development in Ghana.

In the words of Christabel Adwoah Anima and Daniel Asante,³ their church aside the provision of religious needs to people have established school to help the community. For Naa Okaila, the pipe water in their community was constructed by her church.⁴ All these indicate that Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic churches have contributed enormously in the economic, education, social, and healthcare to the socio-economic development of Ghana. It has been observed that these churches pay huge taxes to the government as well due to the hospitals among other facilities they have. It is clear that the provision of employment in institutions established these churches have contributed in reduction of poverty rate in Ghana over the years.

Recommendations and Implications

Government policy makers have a significant responsibility to support church activities in order to increase their contributions. The development of laws that support the expansion of churches across the nation is crucial to keep in mind in order to encourage increased financial commitment from the church. In order to encourage the development of more church-owned businesses, the government should see to it that policies are in place that supports joint ventures between churches and non-governmental organizations. When implementing poverty-reduction initiatives, the government should involve the church community by developing regulations that encourage and facilitate various forms of communication between the church and different environmental captains of industry. This in turn motivates more religious organizations to take part in initiatives that strengthen the institutions already in place as well as the community in which they are located. The government should also introduce policies that offer tax alleviation to religious organizations that are evidently making impact to the communities they are located.

Conclusions and Limitations

In this work it has been noted that neo-Prophetic/Charismatics play major roles in the socio-economic development of Ghana. These impacts are visible in terms of economic, education, social as well as healthcare facilities in the country. Although some negative impacts could be noted, however, it is evident that neo-Prophetic/Charismaticism has proven as a contributing factor for the socio-economic development of Ghana. The study did not cover all churches hence the findings must be viewed in context and the conclusions were derived from the evidence gathered

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¹ Emmanuel Owusu, in discussion with the author, 22nd November, 2021

² Yaw Amponsah, in discussion with the author, 22nd November, 2021

³ Christabel Adwoah Anima and Daniel Asante, in discussion with the author, 22nd November, 2021

⁴ Naa Okaila, in discussion with the author, 22nd November, 2021

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