

The Impact of “Ghana-Must-Go” Returnees on the Agricultural and Community Development of Ghana in the 1980s¹

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Abstract

Although the mass expulsion of West African immigrants by Nigeria in 1983 has attracted major scholarly assessments, the aspect of the contributions of Ghanaian returnees to the agricultural and community development of their country during the period has remained largely neglected in the mainstream literature. This paper fills this critical gap in knowledge by interrogating the impact of the returnees on the Ghanaian society at a time of major food crises in the country. It relies heavily on the assessment of useful archival materials, especially extant newspaper reports collected at the Public Records and Archive Administration Department (PRAAD), Accra, Ghana to critically analyse the activities of the returnees in the areas of agricultural and community development. It argues and concluded that the contributions of the returnees assisted in no small measures in reducing the humanitarian crises and food scarcity associated with the mass expulsion, the unprecedented migrations from Nigeria, as well as the famine that afflicted Ghana in the 1980s.

Keywords: *Expulsion, Agriculture, Development, Ghana, Nigeria*

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Introduction

Whatever is going on today is a big stroke of fortune to this country. The sages have said that in times of adversity, some good fortune is struck. Let Ghanaians exercise restraint and consider the apparent adversity at the moment as part of the hard road to travel to a just and sane society free from exploitation and slavery. Ghanaians shall overcome.

(Graphic Comment, 1983:1)

In January 1983, the Federal Government of Nigeria issued an order on all “illegal” immigrants to regularize their stay or quit the country within fourteen days. That announcement made a great ripple in the mass media in both Ghana and Nigeria because it was like a “lightning bolt from the blue” (Brown, 1989:251-273). Some observers believe it constituted the largest forced migration of people since the nineteenth century (Brown, 1989:251-273; Grivil, 1985; Onwuka, 1982; and Williams, 1982). Media reportage of the event was mixed due to the humanitarian and socio-economic effects of the exercise. Nevertheless, the reactions of the deportees, especially the way they embraced agriculture and community development to ameliorate their conditions in the post-expulsion era made a lot of difference in their lives.

The period prior to the 1983 immigrant expulsion was a difficult one for many Ghanaians. Media reportage was awash with the cry of “hard times,” because of the scarcity of locally produced and imported food items such as cassava, plantain, cocoyam and rice. Hence, one of the major tasks of the government was to arrest the socio-economic decline, introduce new standards of discipline, honesty, hard work and responsibility in all aspects of the Ghanaian society as well as restore the morale of Ghanaians by giving them confidence and hope to alleviate the crises. In that connection, a strategy of government was to make the country self-sufficient in food production and at the same time restore the vitality of the productive base of the economy of Ghana (*People’s Daily Graphic*, November 13, 1984:5). The singsong then was “All hands on deck” (Graphic Comment, January 25, 1983:1) and a good number of Ghanaians decried the fact that a great number of government offices were

overburdened with people who did “virtually nothing but eat” (*People’s Daily Graphic*, May 18, 1983:1). As one observer noted:

What the working and patriotic people of this country should concern themselves with is not how many people can fly to London. The basic question of producing more food on our rich fertile lands to feed ourselves should be of paramount concern. Our export sector has virtually collapsed; and until a big rescue operation is launched, our foreign exchange position will continue to be an embarrassment. Man needs food, shelter and clothing, three essentials that can come out of our producing enough food to eat talk about freedom and independence when the opportunity is at our grasp (sic). The worldwide economic recession will not permit any nation to produce food and send to us for free. The decision to face reality is here and now.

(*People’s Daily Graphic*, May 4, 1983:2)

To address the salient issues in this research, the work is structured into sections. The introduction provides a background to the study by highlighting the effects of the mass expulsion of Ghanaians from Nigeria in 1983. The second section looks at the socio-economic conditions prevalent in Ghana at the time of the expulsion and how government officials sensitised Ghanaians and the returnees to make agriculture and community development a matter of priority as a veritable panacea to the national problems. The next section analyses specific contributions of the returnees to agricultural and community development in their respective regions, while the concluding section provides an overview of the major issues discussed in the paper.

Socio-Economic Conditions in Ghana at the Time of the Returnees

In the early 1980s, Ghana experienced famine, the devastating effects of bushfires and scarce foreign exchange to import food items. Worst still, the Ghanaian government was under stress from the combined effects of long-term economic decline coupled with the poor harvests of 1982, which

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was due to shortage of rainfall as well as a very severe harmattan (Brydon, 1985:570). In a newspaper commentary, an observer averred that:

The hunger that is raging in Ghana today may be probably unsurpassed in the nation's history. Not only are prices scarce; the food items are just not there.... And what is more, due to a certain level of mis-education, a few more people are still praying for fertilizers and tractors which the nation's scarce foreign exchange cannot purchase in large quantities

(People's Daily Graphic, May 21, 1983:1)

In some instances, teachers and other workers had to go on strike because of food shortages or inadequate food supply. For instance, in 1983, teachers in the Greater Accra Region resolved to go in search of food until such a time that they would receive their shares of rice distributed to other workers in the country. It took the intervention of members of the Greater Accra Regional Secretariat of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the National Defence Committee (NDC) of Greater Accra and the Greater Accra Regional Administration (GARA) to prevail on them to end the boycott of classes (Bonsu, 1983:1). It was during this period of socio-economic crises that the mass expulsion brouhaha took place in Nigeria.

Some Western diplomats who observed the exercise lamented that there was little opportunity for the returnees in "destitute Ghana" and that as far as the returnees were concerned, the choices were limited (Cowell, 1983:1). In the same vein, some relief officials averred that the returnees "have gotten used to city ways" and "so they will not be able to just go back to the farm" (Cowell, 1983:1). Interestingly, Commodore Steve Obimpeh, a Ghanaian official in charge of the repatriation taskforce, disclosed that many of the "street-smart returnees" from Lagos's "violent-ridden Agege suburbs" would need to be "reconditioned" (Cowell, 1983:1). Commodore Obimpeh also remarked that the other option would be for the Ghanaians to "wait until Nigeria is no longer so sensitive about them and return" quietly. He argued that he was confident several of the returnees would "go back to Nigeria eventually" because "There is nothing for them here (in Ghana)" (Cowell, 1983:1). His position aligned with that

of one of the returnees, Justice Kwame Owusu, who had spent two years as a domestic servant in Nigeria. Owusu lamented that, “Most of the people who have returned will not be able to stay in Ghana.” Therefore, “We will go on to other West African countries, like the Ivory Coast” to continue with their lives (Cowell, 1983:1). Obviously, Ghana during that period was considered limited in opportunities and the type of luxury that some of the returnees were used to in Nigeria was expected to limit the rehabilitation efforts in Ghana (Cowell, 1983:1).

In contrast, Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings, who accused the Nigerian government of plotting against his government by expelling the Ghanaian immigrants, assured Ghanaians that his plan was to put the returnees to work on the farm. Evidently, the return of a million jobless Ghanaians raised fears they could cause chaos in Ghana’s struggling economy and agriculture was considered a shock absorber to cushion the effects on the returnees. According to Rawlings, “The best place for them (returnees) is in our drive to develop agriculture” (*International Herald Tribune*, February 14, 1983:5). Besides, Rawlings declared that if his government “could resettle the returnees and crank up the economy, it would be a shining example to Africa” (*International Herald Tribune*, February 14, 1983: 5). A Nigerian commentator, M. Siyaka equally shared Rawlings’ optimism. He remarked, unequivocally, that:

Ghanaians are hard-working people. They could be very productive and in fact help to restore the image of their country if Rawlings could provide effective directions of this abundant man-power resources to good result-oriented activities instead of him accusing Nigeria for the height of his possible domestic problems, which I feel is a mere defence mechanism. (Siyaka, 1983:2)

Based on the strategic plans of the government of Ghana, every region was expected and required under the national mobilization programme to achieve a set target in agricultural production, construction activities, primary health care and distribution system in accordance with the government’s Economic Recovery Programme. Besides, each region was requested to produce food and other cash crops for which that particular

region was noted, such that the produce would be more than enough to feed the people and the agro-based industries. For the construction sector, each region was expected to complete as many as possible the numerous abandoned projects, especially schools, health centres and water projects which were designed to improve the standard of living of the people, particularly those in the rural areas (Sam, 1983: 1; Fynn, 1983: 1; Penni, 1983:1).

In this regard, the arrival of the returnees appeared to have been a blessing in disguise. It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the numbers of the returnees from Nigeria. However, the official estimate was somewhere in the range of 900,000 to 1,200,000. The figures were distributed as follows: the Asante Region (32%), Eastern Region (18%), Central, Western and the Greater Accra Regions (together accounted for another 32%); Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions (7% each), and Northern and Upper Regions (2% each) (Brydon, 1985: 570). It should be stressed that each of the last four regions has land borders with Ivory Coast, Togo or Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta). It was reported that returnees from these areas simply walked across the border into Ghana using bush paths because it was considered much easier for them to do so. Hence, it is safe to say that the numbers from those areas were under-represented, coupled with the fact that not all the returnees registered with the Ghanaian authorities (Brydon, 1985: 570).

Moreover, as the deportees left Nigeria for Ghana in their numbers, the Ghana Secretary for Interior, Mr Johnny Hansen, admonished them that Ghana needed them more than ever to contribute their quotas in the reconstruction exercise to rebuild the country. In particular, the Secretary told them that the government would make it possible for those of them who would wish to go into farming to acquire land (Atta-Quayson, 1983:5). In addition, on the first day of their arrival in Ghana Mr C.S. Sackey, the Agona District Administrative Officer, urged the government of Ghana to cause the People's Defence Committees (PDCs), the police and the labour offices in all the towns and villages to register all the deportees to ensure that non-professionals and tradesmen who formed the bulk of their number were found employment in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, he suggested that for the land to be properly tilled, the government should provide tents to make it easy for the

returnees to be mobilised and resettled on the land to produce food and industrial raw materials (Apponsah, 1983:5). An editorial of the *People's Daily Graphic* also noted that the returnees should be made to register with the District Secretaries in the various areas immediately so that they would be able to contribute to the productive sector such as construction, cocoa evacuation, cottage industries, cooperative farming and rural housing. The paper also suggested that the returnees could also be organised and mobilised to form the floating labour force in the districts (Graphic Comment, 1983:1).

Other analysts made some useful suggestions and recommendations on the best strategies to harness and mobilise the maximum possible number of deportees in farming activities and community development. These included first, a proper integration of deportees in the local communities. Second, the District People's National Defence Committee (PNDC) Secretaries were advised to organise meetings with the returnees in cooperation with the local PDC to discuss every possibility of gainful employment and self-employment through farming activities. Third, they were encouraged to consider the possibility of convincing farmers in Southern Ghana to hire the deportees as farm labour as an immediate temporary measure to solve the problem of unemployment in the country.

Fourth and very important, the returnees were advised that they could gain self-employment on the land and in family farm business, which could be expanded subsequently. Fifth, it was suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture, through its extension services, should give all the necessary support, advice and encouragement to all deportees who were going to get involved in farming activities. Sixth, it was recommended that the chiefs and elders in each rural community should be generous in helping deportees in acquiring land. Seventh, it was recommended that government at all levels and well-meaning individuals should assist the deportees to acquire hand tools such as hoes and cutlasses, as well as seeds and other planting materials for sowing. Lastly, on non-farming activities, the communities were advised to organise small projects, preferably on the district and sub-district levels, such as road construction, well and dugout digging, construction of small earth dams, tree planting, road maintenance,

filling of potholes and clearing of roadside ditches with hand tools such as shovels, wheel-barrow and so on (*People's Daily Graphic*, February 5, 1983:4). In all of these suggestions and recommendations, officials were sure they would use persuasion instead of coercion to get the cooperation and support of the returnees.

In the same vein, Maxwell Adu, then acting Deputy Eastern Regional Secretary asked the returnees to champion the cause of the revolution for the rapid development of Ghana's economy. He told more than a thousand returnees at Koforidua on February 1, 1983 that there was no way for them to sit on the fence with the excuse that they had just arrived and needed time to settle down. In a seemingly propagandist tone, he averred that corrupt past governments, which compelled them to leave the shores of Ghana to seek fortunes elsewhere, were no more and advised them to involve themselves in the revolutionary process irrespective of their educational, religious or political inclination (Asante, 1983:1-5).

Returnees' Impact on Agricultural and Community Development

In order to maximize their contributions to agricultural and community development, several of the returnees organised themselves into associations based on their skills as well as places of origins within Ghana. Moreover, the returnees made sure they had their monthly general meetings unflinchingly. For instance, a group known as the Osu Dzornaa Repatriates Association, comprising thirty returnees, started a fish farm, poultry, piggery, livestock and settlement complex at Osu near Christianborg Castle, around the Osu Klorley Lagoon. The group received assistance from some departments in the region and from the Regional Administration, which provided implements and food items. The Regional Administration also provided agricultural experts, one of which was the Regional Under-Secretary for Agriculture, Mr E. Netey. On the other hand, Mr Seth Awuku, leader of the returnees, disclosed how members of his group used to work in similar fields in the Owerri Water-ways in Nigeria before they were expelled by the Nigerian authorities. He was convinced they would employ the techniques they acquired in Nigeria to improve their living conditions in Ghana by contributing to the agricultural revolution in the country. Indeed, the project was expected to serve as a model tourist centre, a pilot project for others to emulate and to encourage

the use of improved methods of fish farming among residents of the area (Quaynor, 1984:1).

Moreover, in order to encourage the active participation of the returnees in agricultural activities, Rawlings made official and personal appeals to the National House of Chiefs in Kumasi on January 27, 1983. He tasked them to assist in resettling the returnees from the region and others interested in farming activities in the area by making arable land easily available to them. This was to enable them contribute their quotas to the development of the country as well as providing them with the necessary impetus to succeed in their self-assigned task. Specifically, he advised the traditional institutions not to show resentment or ill feelings towards the returnees, adding that all Ghanaians must try to embrace them and welcome them into their fold for their rapid rehabilitation (Sam, 1983:1). This action by the chairman of the PNDC acted as morale booster to the affected returnees.

The appeal by Rawlings resonated across the length and breadth of Ghana. For instance, the chief of Kwashie-man Official Town, Nii Yartey, released to the Odorkor Official Town Returnees Association 24 hectares of land on the Accra-Nsawam Road for farming and general agricultural activities. Mr Frank K. Aaful, who was the chairman of the association, expressed gratitude to the traditional leader for the good gesture and for providing the impetus for agricultural development in Ghana. Having secured the piece of land, members of the association urged the government to supply them and other returnees aspiring to enter into farming with seedlings, agricultural facilities such as cutlasses and tractors so that an association such as theirs would hit the ground running in food production. Moreover, members of the association also appealed to the government to mobilise and educate all returnees on basic agricultural theories and practices to boost food production in the country (Armah, 1983:1). Fortunately, an appeal for fund by the association yielded C2,065.00, which was used to start the farm projects.

In a related development, returnees at Winneba formed a cooperative farm of about 10 hectares of land where they planted food crops for distribution among members as well as to sell their yields to other Ghanaians in order to raise money for the enlargement of the cooperative

farm. More interestingly, they set aside two Saturdays monthly and provided free labour on various settlement farms established by the "Kristo Asafo" Spiritual Movement in the Central Region of Ghana. Mr James Addison Kwabena Odoom, assistant secretary of the Winneba Returnees Association, who coordinated the activities of the returnees, disclosed that their decision to work in the farm was in appreciation of "the gallant role" the church played during their evacuation from Nigeria (*People's Daily Graphic*, May 14, 1983:1). For the record, the church spent more than C1 million on food aid when the returnees were camped at the Trade Fair Site on their way from Nigeria (*People's Daily Graphic*, May 14, 1983:1).

In addition to agricultural activities, the Winneba branch of the returnees also participated in road construction and community service. For instance, Messrs J.W.K. Dadson and J.K. Amooh, two engineers among the returnees, volunteered their services, repaired and operated the tractors of the Winneba branch of the Feeder Roads Department. Residents of the affected areas rightfully acknowledged their selfless contributions to feeder road construction in Ghana (*People's Daily Graphic*, May 14, 1983:1).

In the same vein, in 1983 the Abeka PDC acquired a four-hectare land at Abeka for 135 returnees who registered with the committee. They cultivated maize and cassava in order to boost food production in the area. There was cooperation between the Abeka PDC and the traditional institution in the area because the Stool Father of Abeka, Nii Kwei Bove, released the land. Hence, the returnees expressed their gratitude to the traditional authorities for coming to their aid. The land was immediately cultivated and it produced high yields when the crops were harvested (Armah, 1983:1).

Moreover, a group of returnees in Agona Duakwa established a four-hectare maize, cassava, okra and pepper farm to produce food for their members and other Ghanaians. For their action, the government of Ghana, through the National Mobilization Committee (NMC) as well as the Relief Supplies Management Committee (RSMC) presented various items such as rice, flour, skimmed milk, canvas shoes, jeans and T-shirts to their members to encourage them to produce more food for the country (*People's Daily Graphic*, May 12, 1983:1).

In the Eastern Region, one thousand two hundred (1,200) returnees were mobilised to take part in the replanting of burnt cocoa farms in that part of the country. Under the exercise, the returnees were required to work under the technical supervision of agricultural personnel to ensure the success of the replanting of cocoa seedlings in the affected areas. Mr E. Okraku Ahwireng, Chairman of the Eastern Region Returnees Mobilization Committee, coordinated the activities of the returnees. Their participation in the cocoa seedlings replanting exercise was in appreciation of the PNDC's efforts in ensuring their safe return from Nigeria early in 1983. The coordinator observed that the returnees' involvement in the exercise would also reduce the cost of labour to be incurred during the planting period. He also disclosed that the government had been called upon to provide the returnees with basic farm tools to enable them settle permanently on their farms in addition to rendering *pro bono* services (Asante, 1983:1).

Rawlings officially launched the campaign on the rehabilitation of burnt cocoa farms in the country on July 1, 1983 at Akyem-Kwabeng in the Eastern Region. The launching ceremony attracted a large number of people including farmers, chiefs as well as members of the PNDC and other government officials. At the occasion, Rawlings urged the farmers to seize the opportunity offered by the government to replant their cocoa since the crop played a major role in the economic development of the country. He specifically paid special attention to the returnees and urged the chairman of the mobilization and rehabilitation of Ghanaian returnees, Commodore S.G. Obimpeh, to see to it that the returnees were given the opportunity to play an active role in the national exercise, which was aimed at boosting cocoa and food production, which had declined because of bush fires (*People's Daily Graphic*, July 2 1983:1). The government went further to pay compensations to the affected farmers for two years, including C600 a year per 0.4047 hectare (one acre) of cocoa farm burnt while food crop farmers were paid C300 compensation for the same hectares. This was after the farmers had submitted details of their burnt farms to the Economic Review Committee set up by the government through the purchasing clerks of the Produce Buying Division (PBD) (*People's Daily Graphic*, June 11 1983:1).

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In a similar development, the Korle-Gonno Returnees Association acquired 100 hectares of land for farming at Oduman, near Amasaman in the Greater-Accra Region. The returnees planted cassava, garden eggs, groundnuts and watermelon on the piece of land. To facilitate their work, the returnees erected sheds for settlement on the farm. They also received some tents, camp beds and other farm implements from interested members of the public. In addition, the returnees received food items from the Greater-Accra Regional Resettlement and Rehabilitation Committee to enable them settle on the farm. The food items included fifteen cartons of cooking oil, nine bags of maize and eleven bags of rice (*People's Daily Graphic*, June 11, 1983:1).

During the June 4 holiday of 1983, some returnees across Ghana joined other Ghanaians to clean-up gutters and bushes in their various communities in response to the PNDC's call for Ghanaians to use the opportunity to engage themselves in meaningful ventures. To the returnees, it was an avenue to contribute towards national welfare. Indeed, most of the returnees were made to understand that the future of Ghana rested on the ability of the people to harness the resources of the country for their own welfare and those of their communities. To that end, they were commended for realising that no outside nation would save Ghanaians from the socio-economic crises that bedevilled them in the 1980s (*Graphic Comment*, June 7, 1983:1).

Similarly, in June 1983 one hundred (100) returnees resident at Akyem Manso near Akyem Oda spent over three hours clearing the bushes around Akyem Manso Post Office, the District Court Grade II, the CMB shed and along some of the streets in the town. The returnees were part of the Akyem Manso Returnees Association. They decided to do the communal labour every Thursday and Sunday in order to improve upon sanitation in their community. In addition, some of the returnees offered free labour at the Akyem Manso State Oil Palm Plantation, while the rest helped in putting up a new mission house for the local Salvation Army Church. The returnees were also actively involved in farming and cultivated a three-hectare maize farm in 1983 alone (*Kyei-Boateng*, 1983:1).

In a different location in the month of June, more than 900 returnees in fourteen villages around Assin Foso in the Central Region

were engaged in farming as their contribution towards the government's agricultural programme. The Assin District Council supplied the returnees with cutlasses, while individual farmers were allocated land to cultivate rice, maize, cassava, and cocoyam on a large scale. It was generally believed by the returnees that the exercise was to generate interest in the PNDC's "Operation Feed the People" programme (Ocran, 1983:1).

Returnees in Agosokrom in Sunyani were also active in community and agricultural programmes of their communities. Indeed, by the first quarter of 1983 twenty-one of them planted 10.8 hectares of maize, cassava, vegetables as well as 1,600 mounds of yam on their farm at Kanto, near Nsuatre. Mr A.K. Bossman, then managing director of Nakodeku Construction Limited donated the piece of land to them. The returnees started the farm project with an initial capital of C4,200, from a contribution of C200 per returnee. In addition, the farmers supplemented their resources with their allocation of relief items, which were consumed collectively on the farm (*People's Daily Graphic*, June 25, 1983:1).

In the District of Ada, returnees were organized into groups to assist their communities in the areas of farming and fishing. Some of them assisted the local fishermen on their return from sea by helping them carry their nets for drying after the day's fishing. In addition, some other returnees assisted their communities, especially those around the Songor Lagoon in the production of salt. In addition, a few of the returnees in the area were involved in farming to feed themselves and the rest of their community (*People's Daily Graphic*, June 27, 1983:1).

Similarly, in June 1983 more than one thousand (1,000) returnees in the Cape Coast District spent six hours at the Cape Coast Central Hospital clearing weeds and rehabilitating broken-down hospital equipment. During the exercise, the returnees were also involved in scraping and painting of hospital equipment including beds, baby cots, screens, and bed-side tables at the Central Hospital. They were coordinated by and operated under the auspices of the Cape Coast District Returnees Association. Members of the association resolved to undertake the exercise every Saturday to support the Central Region's "Save-Our-Hospital-Fun" committee, which was saddled with the responsibilities to carry out rehabilitation of projects in the hospitals and health centres. In

the same vein, the association also coordinated the efforts of the returnees in the district towards large-scale farming to boost agricultural production (*People's Daily Graphic*, April 11, 1983:1). Moreover, the national executive of the Civil Engineering and Building Contractors Association employed some skilled and unskilled returnees. They were engaged to carry out several voluntary projects across selected districts in Ghana. These projects included repair of roads in the capital and other parts of the country (*The Mirror*, February 5, 1983:3).

Besides, some other returnees chose seemingly unusual ways to show their appreciation for every kind gesture extended to them by fellow Ghanaians and others alike at the time of their repatriations from Nigeria. For instance, one Mr Christopher A. Aryeetey, who was expelled from Nigeria in January 1983, volunteered to work free of charge for three days each for seven organisations which contributed to the evacuation of the deportees. Mr Aryeetey's decision was a reciprocal gesture towards the organisations, which kindly contributed over C19 million in expenses during the exercise. Some of the affected organisations included the Accra City Council (ACC), State Transport Corporation (STC), Black Star Line (BSL), Omnibus Services Authority (OSA), Ghana Ports Authority (GPA), the Accra-Tema Zonal Co-operative Bakers Union and the State Fishing Corporation (SFC). Indeed, Mr Aryeetey went ahead to give details of where he wished to render his service by expressing his readiness to work at the conservancy section of the ACC, the loading sections of the STC, SFC, BSL, OSA, and the GPA, with the ACC as his last place of service. In addition, Mr Aryeetey indicated his willingness to offer his services to the Red Cross because a Red Cross employee saved him when he disembarked from the MV Sissili in January 1983 and almost drowned in the sea (Akordor, 1983:1). Lastly, Mr Aryeetey assured Ghanaians that the returnees were ready to make personal sacrifices as their own contributions to the revolutionary process in Ghana.

Similarly, several returnees were part of those who devoted the yuletide celebrations of 1984 to community service as well as rendering *pro bono* services to government agencies. On Christmas Day, for instance, some of them spent hours loading maize at buying centres and off-loading them into warehouses. Similarly, they were part of the over one thousand workers of the Ghana Cocoa Board and its subsidiaries who

assisted in off-loading cocoa at the Tema main harbour for shipment. Furthermore, those in Sunyani and other communities across Ghana spent several hours evacuating cocoa and cleaning their communities as a prelude to the celebration of the third milestone of the December 31st Revolution in 1984 (Graphic Comment, 1984:2). The *People's Daily Graphic* interpreted the development to mean, "Ghanaians have become aware of the fact that until such time that their socio-economic life begins to show a healthy sign of improvement there is no time to stand and stir, let alone hang the hair down in futile and useless merry-making when there is work to be done" (Graphic Comment, 1984:2; Akyeampong, 2010:11-24; Akyeampong, 2004:25-42).

In contrast, returnees who did not engage in food production or other "meaningful" ventures were warned that they would be denied access to the supply of relief items. In fact, the Chairman of the National Mobilization Committee (NMC), Commodore S.G. Obimpeh, warned a group of "returnee loafers" and those engaged in "the selling of petty items such as dog chains" that he would stop the distribution of relief food because the exercise was expected to be based on production capacity (*People's Daily Graphic*, May 12, 1983:1). Similarly, the returnees were warned not to allow themselves to be used to create confusion with the sole aim of making the PNDC unpopular because the consequence of such an action would be "ruthless sanctions" from the PNDC (Asante, 1983:5).

The efforts of the returnees and other Ghanaians to actively participate in agricultural production and community development paid off handsomely. By the end of 1984, several Ghanaians were satisfied that they could easily feed themselves instead of relying on food aid from outside the country. Commenting on this enormous improvement, the *People's Daily Graphic* noted that in 1983 Ghanaians were "going around the world, bowl in hand, asking for food to eat. This year (1984) we are in a position where some of our neighbours have approached us to help them out of a similar situation" (Graphic Comment, December 3, 1984:2). The paper averred that, "Ghanaians can take some pride in this achievement which we have made by God's help." It also stressed that Ghanaians could also take pride that "our modest achievement in food production can be an

example to our neighbours who are faced with similar problems" (Graphic Comment, December 3, 1984:2).

However, a few of the returnees faced hostile reception in some communities despite their zeal to contribute to agricultural and community development. For instance, Mr C.N. Kissiedu, the regional lands officer of Juapong, destroyed a farm cultivated by forty-three returnees at Juapong on May 8, 1983. He claimed to have lawfully acquired the land from one Togbe Kponor Kwasi V. Barely two months before the farm was destroyed, the returnees had already planted cassava, maize, groundnuts and okra on the piece of land. The reason given by Mr Kissiedu was that he needed to re-plough the land for his own agricultural production (Tokro, 1983:1).

Conclusion

In all, by the end of 1984, the returnees had made appreciable contributions to agricultural and community development in Ghana. For one thing, the mobilisation efforts in the agricultural sector helped to motivate many people to take to farming ranging between the small backyard farming to the small-scale, cooperative farming to big commercial farming ventures. These efforts assisted Ghana to achieve a near total target for food production and alleviated the food scarcity syndrome that bedevilled Ghana in the early 1980s. Indeed, even though their efforts did not completely get the country out of the wood, they went a long way to alleviate the situation.

In addition, the involvement of the deportees in farming and community development, either individually or in small groups, presented numerous advantages because it afforded them the opportunity to exercise the spirit of self-reliance and self-help in the face of their deportation predicament. In that connection, the returnees complemented other Ghanaians in providing the much-needed food crops during the period of famine. Most of them were aware that they must grasp the lesson that the best and safest way of searching for better life in Ghana was by helping to improve their agricultural and community development. Hence, consciously and unconsciously, the returnees helped to address the twin problems of unemployment and food shortage that bedevilled Ghana in the early 1980s. In addition, several of the deportees were aware of the

fact that for them to throng towns and cities instead of being engaged in meaningful farm schemes would simply mean nothing but perpetuation of the suffering they went through because of their expulsion from Nigeria. Indeed, a particular deportee was of the opinion that deportees “may gain a salaried job in town, but to secure one’s food and better life by getting involved in farming and community development” was much better (Graphic Comment, November 23, 1985:2).

Lastly, from the pieces of evidence discussed in this work, it is clear that while Ghanaians dreaded the hardship created by hunger, drought, bushfires and other related socio-economic crises, they were subjected to the agony of taking care of extra population brought about by the mass expulsion of Ghanaians by the Nigerian authorities in 1983. Fortunately, the returnees realised early enough that they needed to make meaningful impact on food self-sufficiency to ameliorate their conditions and put their country on the path of socio-economic recovery. Hence, several of them went ahead to engage in boundary-pushing agricultural and community development activities. They were conscious of the fact that socio-economic crises were capable of exposing and subjecting Ghana to economic and political manipulations (Graphic Comment, November 23, 1985:2; Aluko, 1985:539-560; Balabkins, 1982).

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