



ADMINISTRATIVE EXCHANGE PROGRAM BETWEEN GHANA AND NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA, GERMANY



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INTRODUCTION

The Government of Ghana and the North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) Region of Germany, in 2015, signed an agreement for an exchange program between the public service officials from both countries. The exchange program's primary focus is to share ideas and experiences with the aim of fostering development among the two (2) countries. The programme is organized annually.

The 3rd cohort for the exchange programme was scheduled for May 2020, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed to 3rd to 13th May 2022. Six (6) public servants from the Ministries of Health, Education, Local Government, Foreign Affairs and Food and Drugs Authority were selected for the programme. However, the representation from Local Government could not attend the programme because he could not fulfill the COVID-19 requirement during the Visa application process. Each public servant from Ghana was pair with the corresponding public servant (Tandem Partner) from the Ministries in Germany.



Figure 1: Selected participants from Ghana arrived at their hotel in Germany, May 2022

Mr. Benjamin Osei Tutu was selected to represent the FDA. I worked with Mr. Rolf Kamphausen, Deputy Head of Department, Ministry for Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of NRW. On arrival, a welcome dinner at a Restaurant “Im Goldenen Kessel”

Bolkerstraße 44 40213 Düsseldorf, was organized for participants to meet each other for the first time and interact with Tandem partners.

MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES

On Wednesday 4th May 2022, a one-day seminar on "State building in Germany (Federalism) and Ghana (role of the 10 regions and "House of Chiefs") - Structure of public administration was organized for participants. This was done in one of the conference rooms of the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Affairs. All tandems (Ghana and Germany) had a brief presentation on their working roles in their respective agencies.

The subsequent two days, 5th and 6th May 2022 were individual tandem days where the German counterpart took their Ghanaian tandems to area of interest. My tandem partner and I focused on areas such as Food control system in North Rhine-Westphalia and Meat Hygiene and Production, food safety. We visited the Ministry for Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, to discuss the Structure and Functioning of the Food Control System in North Rhine-Westphalia as well as Food Fraud.

I got to learn about the measures and tools employed in food control systems in North Rhine-Westphalia. A particular one of interest was the tool for risk classification of food facilities for the purpose of food control. My tandem agreed to assist Ghana adopt and adapt such a tool for its food control system. Later in the afternoon, we visited the official Laboratory CVUA RRW in Krefeld, to discuss the sampling and testing procedures for food.

The next day started with a visit to the Tönnies Slaughterhouse, Cold Store, Meat Production and Laboratory, where we were given a tour of the facility in Rheda-Wiedenbrück.

We later visited the Veterinary Office, in Gütersloh, to discuss the Food Safety Official Controls in the meat production sector. It came to light that official food control in both countries are similar. The slight difference is the level of sophistication in the control processes. While the process in Germany is more electronic and risk based, Ghana does a lot physical and manual controls.



Figure 2: Tour at Tönnies slaughterhouse and meat production facility, May 2022

On Monday 9th May 2022, all the tandem partners travelled to Berlin. In Berlin the Group visited the Berlin wall to learn about its history. The team then visited the representation of North Rhine-Westphalia in Berlin to learn about their activities in Berlin and role they play on behalf of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Group later had lunch with the Ghanaian Ambassador H.E. Ambassador Gina Ama Blay and her entourage. Each tandem partners explained their roles and proposed project with the Ambassador and the representatives of North Rhine Westphalia.

Later in the afternoon, my tandem partner and I visited the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) - Crisis management Unit. We realised that crisis management in Germany is similar to Ghana's Food Safety Emergency Response and both countries report to INFOSAN. However, Germany has a more developed and functional system whiles Ghana's own is yet to be validated. My partner agreed to provide a sample of simulation exercise that can be used to validate the Food Safety Emergency Response Plan of Ghana.

The next day, we had a guided tour of the House of NRW History, Exhibition "75th Anniversary NRW" at Mannesmannufer 2, Düsseldorf. The group later continued their tandem activities, where my partner and I received a presentation on Digital Tools and Support at the Ministry for Environment, Agriculture, Conservation and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. Dr. Kinkel, the

resource person from LANUV, agreed to assist Ghana develop digital tools that can be used to conduct risk base food control.

We continued our tandem activities on Wednesday and Thursday, where my partner and I visited some Agricultural establishment and production site in to Immerath (Neu) as well as the BoFrost Company in Kleve.



Figure 3: Me Conducting organoleptic analysis at the laboratory of BoFrost Company

The group had an evaluation of the Administrative Exchange Programme in the afternoon of Thursday 12th May 2022, followed by a farewell dinner in the evening.

The German tandem team also visited Ghana from the 13th to the 23rd June 2022. (Copy of programmes attached)

OUTCOME OF THE PROGRAM

The interactions and meetings between us resulted in the the following;

- Assisting Ghana to adopt and adapt the risk classification tool for food facilities for its food control system.
- Development of an electronic system/platform for food control activities using the risk base tool that will be developed.
- Assisting Ghana to implement a simulation exercise for its Food Safety Emergency Response Plan

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The exchange programme was very useful as it allowed for the exchange of technical and cultural ideas. It will be very important that Ghana takes advantage of all the areas that the Germans wish to collaborate with us.