

Overview of GRASAG Green Campaign

The GRASAG Green Campaign is an Environmental Protection Oriented Programme to be organised by the Graduate Students Association of Ghana (GRASAG National).

The programme is meant to sensitise students of selected second cycle institutions in the country about the need to preserve the nation's forests. The programme also seeks to form Environmental Protection Groups in the various schools and to plant at least 2000 trees across the country.

Why Green Campaign?

Ghana's natural resources, upon which so much of the country's economic activity and the population's livelihood depend, are disappearing at an alarming rate. The country's land area is 24 million hectares. The natural landscape comprises four major ecological zones (of nine zones in total).

These are;

1. Tropical moist forest in the south and south west (the high forest zone)
2. Transitional zone in the middle belt between north and south
3. Savannah woodlands in the north;
4. The Accra coastal plain.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 focuses on life on earth. Target 15.2 seeks to promote sustainable management for all forests, stop deforestation, and restored degraded forests, and promote sustainable afforestation and reforestation globally.

Globally, forest cover continues to shrink and reports indicate the rate is 30.7 per cent in 2015 from 31.2 percent in 2000 (UN, 2018). That notwithstanding, the report shows that forest conservation is on the rise and the rate of forest loss has slowed although the coverage of this progress may not have been the reality in some parts of the globe.

A recent news report however reveals that, Ghana is losing its forest faster than any other country in the world (myjoyponline.com). The estimate of forest loss in Ghana is about 60 per cent followed by the Ivory Coast with 28 per cent according to the Global Forest Watch (GFW).

It is even more significant than ever that deliberate attempts must be made at forest conservation in Ghana. The alarming rate of climate change and impact of climate change variability will have negative implication for Ghana if efforts are not intensified towards forest conservation. This is because forest cover is necessary for mitigating the impact of climate change (UNDP-GHANA, 2019).

Forest conservation is a sustainable practice of cultivating and preserving forested areas for the future generations (Pawar & Rothkar, 2015). It involves forest activities that are both beneficial to humans as well as the natural environment as a whole. Forest conservation provides biodiversity like medicine, water regulation, soil formation, habitat for animals, and a host of others. Moreover, forest preservation leads to improved air quality and clean water provision, especially from under ground sources as well as from streams and rivers. There are also recreational opportunities forest conservation provides like the Kakum National Park in the Central Region among a host of others in Ghana. Additionally, forests like the Aburi gardens and

the Legon Botanical gardens provides location for academic research purposes to advance knowledge and development in many fields including medicine.

However, regardless of the enormous opportunities forest cover provides, there has been very little efforts by both Ghanaians and government to protect and preserve them for future use. There is constant degradation of forests in Ghana mainly for agricultural, mining, and logging purposes.

The REDD+ Readiness Proposal for Ghana (2010) identifies the principal drivers of deforestation and degradation broadly as:

- (1) Agricultural expansion (50%);
- (2) Wood harvesting (35%);
- (3) Urban sprawl and infrastructure development (10%);
- (4) Mining and mineral exploitation (5%).

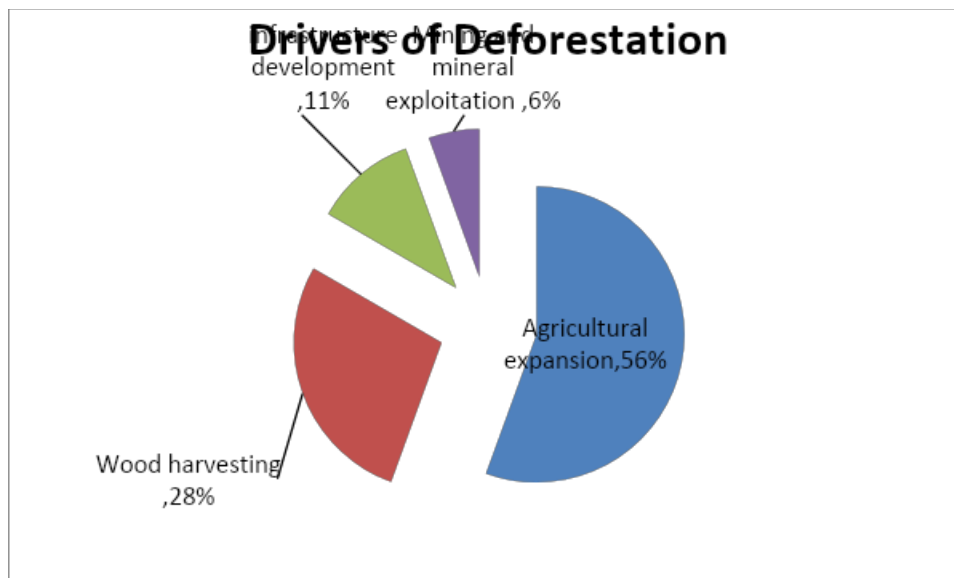
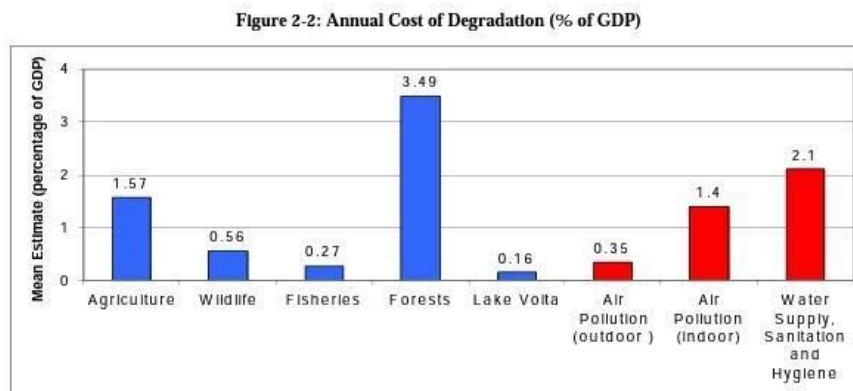


Figure 1Source: REDD+ Readiness Proposal for Ghana, 2010

According to the International Tropical Timber organization (ITTO) reports, the rate of deforestation in Ghana is 2.19%. In 2012 the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources reported that from the country's original forest cover of 8.2 million hectares at the beginning of the 20th Century, only an estimated 1.6 million hectares remain.

As far back as 2006, the Country Environmental Analysis (CEA) estimated costs of natural resource degradation to cover costs of environmental health effects. The mean estimated annual cost of environmental degradation was nearly US \$850 million or 10.0 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The degradation of natural assets (agricultural soils, forests and savanna woodlands, coastal fisheries, wildlife resources, and Lake Volta's environment) costs at least US\$520 million annually (6.0% of Ghana's annual GDP) and health effects account for nearly US \$330 million or 3.8% of GDP.



Source: World Bank (2005a) and World Bank 2006

Due to the high rate of deforestation, Ghana is currently a net emitter of CO₂ emissions, and thus contributes to the global imbalance of greenhouse gases driving climate change. The average annual historical emissions from all activities 2000-2015 was estimated at 61.6 million tCO₂e yr⁻¹ and the average annual removals were 610 thousand t CO₂e yr⁻¹. Over 66% of emissions were due to deforestation, while legal and illegal logging made up 28% combined.

Fuelwood and forest fire accounted for a minimal percentage of total emissions, making up just 6% and 1% respectively (Forestry Commission, 2017).

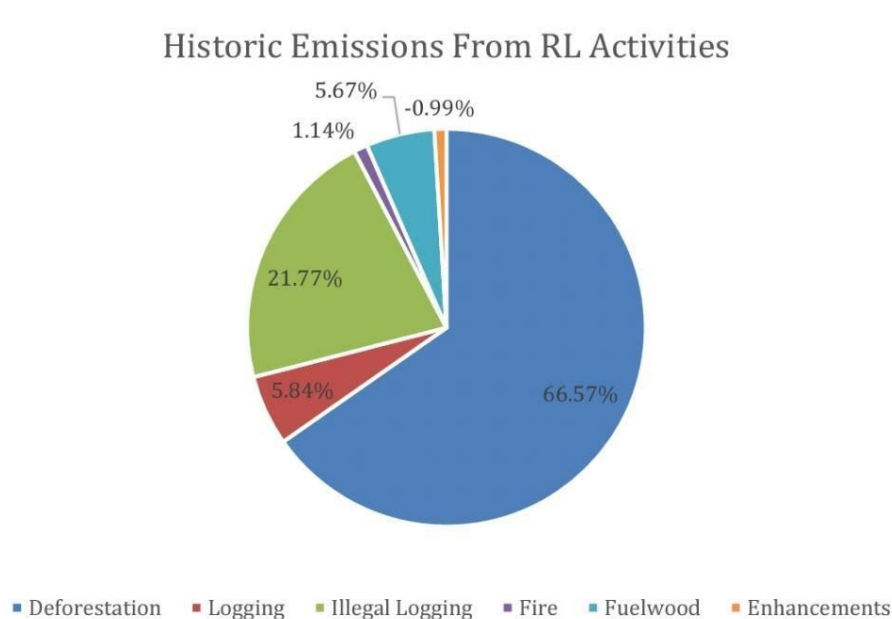


Figure 2: Source: Forestry Commission, 2017

In finding a solution to this, Ghana began its engagement in REDD+ in 2008 through the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). In 2016, it submitted a draft Emission

Reduction Program Document (ER-PD) for the sub-national Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP), which is concentrated in the High Forest Zone (HFZ).

The basis behind REDD+ is that developing countries should be financially compensated for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, conservation, the sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

As such, the Graduate Students Association (GRASAG National) is seeking to inculcate into Senior High School Students the benefit of protecting the environment and most importantly, our forest through education and tree planting. It is seeking to target schools in areas where some known forests are located and where such forests are under severe threat by several activities including and most importantly human activities.

The project will also see to the planting of some 2000 trees within a year across the country.