

Sustainable Finance for Conservation in Africa

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT: LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL FUND SUCCESS

By

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1. Introduction

My brief as Chair for this session includes complementing the two presentations with the experience of Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust (GHCT). This will be done under History and Objectives, Governance structure, Challenges and Conclusion.

2. History and Objectives

About 14 years ago, the leadership of one of the administrative regions of Ghana (Central Region) initiated the idea of harnessing the region's natural and cultural/historical resources for economic development. This was to be done, among others, through the conservation of a block of the fast-disappearing West African tropical rainforest and preservation of world-acclaimed slave edifices (castles/dungeons) dotting the coast, both in the region.

The proposal received support from Central government and various organisations, principally USAID. In providing money for the project it, was decided right from the inception of the initiative that a resourced organisation (GHCT) will be established at the end of the programme period to ensure the sustainability of the project. Specifically, "GHCT was inaugurated on August 31, 1996 with the objective of consolidating and sustaining the gains accruing from the Natural Resource Conservation and Historic Preservation (NRCHP Project", which had the objectives of supporting state organisations in the establishment and management of a national park (Kakum National Park) and the stabilisation, rehabilitation and management of three World Heritage Monuments (Cape Coast and Elmina Castles and Fort St. Jago, also in Elmina).

GHCT also supports the state organisations (Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission and Ghana Museums and Monuments Board) in facilitating community based activities in the areas around the Project sites. Finally, it also intends in the long run to catalyse the development of similar projects in

other parts of Ghana with the support of funds availed it through a USAID-funded US\$2 million endowment.

3. Governance Structure

a) The Board

GHCT is managed by a 17-member board of Trustees comprising eminent Ghanaians (eleven) and international (six) Conservationists/fundraisers who are experienced, seasoned and responsible individuals. The Board which meets three times in two years has the following sub-committees:

- Executive Committee (meets at least 4 times between Board Meetings).
- Finance Committee (meets at least 3 times between Board Meetings).
- Parks Committee (meets twice between Board Meetings)
- Monuments Committee (meets twice between Board Meetings).
- Grants Committee (meets during Board Meetings)
- Enterprise Development Committee (meets twice between Board Meetings).

b) Secretariat

There is a Secretariat headed by an Executive Director that supports the Board to manage the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

c) Partners

The history of GHCT demands that close working relations are maintained with state organs, non-governmental, and community-based organisations. Some of these are: Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Ghana Tourist Board, Municipal and District Assemblies, and Traditional Authorities.

4. Challenges

By our unique and singular interest in natural and cultural/heritage conservation/preservation (perhaps the only such Trust in Africa) and the history of our birth we have.

- to develop broad but detailed interests and concerns over the total Ghanaian heritage
- to develop effective systems for linking up with and keeping our trustees abreast of events.
- to develop appropriate mechanisms to work with state and non-state institutions.
- to raise funds to meet the objectives of the Trust.

5. Conclusion

GHCT manages a good mix of foreign and locals as Trustees. The experiential enhancement and connections brought by the Trustees make up for the costs incurred in organising especially Board Meetings. This is very high as Trustees have to be supported to attend. The democratic processes adopted in filling vacancies and the clearly voluntary and yet thorough spirit with which Trustees discharge their functions help in no small measure in the achievement of the Trust's unique responsibilities – preserving Ghana's heritage.