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The case of Perez Chapel International

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Pentecostalism and sustainable development

Ideas about sustainable development emerged in the 1960s when ecologists raised concerns about preserving the environment and ecosystems, overcoming the impact of economic growth on the environment. Sustainable development has been defined by many people and organisations. The most widely accepted definition was published in the Brundtland Report, released by the World Commission on Environment and Development (United Nations General Assembly 1987), which states that sustainable development is ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (United Nations General Assembly 1987). Diesendorf (2000, 3) opines that ‘the context in which the definition is embedded indicates that “needs” include a sound environment, a just society and a healthy economy’. The definition stipulates that sustainable development encompasses the interconnection of three major elements: economic growth, social cohesion/inclusion and environmental protection. Sustainable development is a goal by all humans for all humans. It demands determination in building a comprehensive and resilient viable future for all (Environmental Bureau 2017). Bob Giddings *et al.* (2002, 187) argue that even though the three concepts that define sustainable development are interconnected, they can be viewed ‘as separate although connected entities’. Since ‘economy is dependent on society and the environment while human existence and society are dependent on, and within the environment, efforts toward achieving sustainable development must look at issues holistically’ (187). Environmental degradation and mismanagement/mishandling of natural resources can cause economic hardship leading to famine. An example can be cited of the 1983 hunger in Ghana because of bush-fires and deforestation and mismanagement of Ghana’s economy (Asamoah-Gyadu 2013, 63).

Sustainable development and holistic development therefore go together. By definition, holistic development is a development that takes into consideration the totality of human needs. That includes the physical, spiritual, moral, psychological, mental and the emotional needs of people. Holistic development can provide the rationale for achieving sustainable development. Building a

viable economy, an inclusive society and an enabling environment all depend on the people who live in the society. The path of sustainable development must lead to the building of lives of the human beings in the society who would then build the economy and enhance the environment. Human resource development within society is therefore crucial to the development of every community. Education then becomes the bedrock for building the capacity of the individual which reflects on the economy and the society as well as the environment.

This study takes cognisance of various debates about the meaning of sustainable development. Some argue that the Brundtland definition is not adequate as it puts more emphasis on the human species (Giddings *et al.* 2002, 188) than on the environment. Sustainable development is a balanced interconnection of the economy, the environment and the society. In the words of Emas, '[t]he overall goal of sustainable development (SD) is the long term stability of the economy and environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process' (2015, 2).

The study sought not to contest meanings but to highlight the contribution of Pentecostalism to the development of human resource and the society. The Brundtland definition is therefore still essential and a good foundation for a relevant conceptual framework to build upon. Sustainability defines the global development agenda 2030 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set up for international collaboration (United Nations 2018). The goals have 17 universal targets which apply to all countries of the world. These targets are to be achieved by 2030. All hands are expected to be on deck if these goals are to be achieved. Corporate bodies, institutions, businesses and governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are all responsible for the implementation of these goals. Goal number four of the target list is quality education, which has many implications for sustainable development (United Nations 2017). The church is therefore not left out as it has a significant responsibility towards humanity and the universe. Koegelenberg (2016) underscores the role of churches and NGOs in development in South Africa. This study examines the role of the churches in Ghana using Perez Chapel International as a case study.

Paul Gifford, a visiting lecturer to Central University College (now Central University) in the year 2000, led a discussion centred on Pentecostalism and development. The insignificant contribution Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches had made towards social and environmental development was noted with regret. Comparing Pentecostals with the Missionary Churches in Ghana, one could notice at a glance the difference in the impact made by each regarding development. While the Missionary Churches like Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Evangelical Presbyterians in Ghana could count so many educational schools, clinics and other projects, few of these projects could be attributable to the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches (Owusu-Ansah 2016, 597). However, in the span of 18 years after that discussion, a lot

has happened. The Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches have taken the issue of social responsibility seriously and become partners in Ghana's socioeconomic development.

Emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana

Pentecostalism has shifted the centre of Christianity from the western world to the southern hemisphere (Barrett and Johnson 2000, 24–25). Its emergence has changed the dynamics so much that it has become a subject of research by academics and scholars. West Africa in general and Ghana in particular is no exception (Anderson 2004; Larbi 2000). In Ghana, Peter Newman Anim is credited as being the father of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. This is because there are four major older classical Pentecostal Churches; out of these, three of them – namely Christ Apostolic Church, Apostolic Church of Ghana and the Church of Pentecost – all have their roots in the work of Apostle Peter Newman Anim. Over time, there emerged another brand of Pentecostal Churches from the late 1970s and early 1980s. These churches are known as Charismatic or Neo-Pentecostal Churches and ministries. The Neo-Pentecostal Churches developed from the para-church (fellowships) movements in Ghana in the mid-1970s and 1980s. The charismatic ministries share the fundamental doctrines that the classical Pentecostal Churches believe in. The added emphasis is on healing, prosperity, faith and practical experience. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005, 97) notes that the term 'Charismatic Churches' has both historical and theological implications. He declares:

Historically, it refers to independent churches emerging from neo-Pentecostal movements since the 1970s. Theologically, the expression defines the ecclesiology of these new independent churches in which every believer is considered a potential recipient of a charisma(s) or ministry gift(s) of the Holy Spirit.

(Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, 97)

Charismatic Churches have become very vibrant and have occupied the public space due to their use of the media and modern technology (de Witte 2003). Again, the newer Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches have become partners in the development of the various nations in which they are found (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). They have provided educational facilities, health-care, infrastructure, potable water and social amenities for deprived communities and the vulnerable in the country (Asamoah-Kumi 2013). The purpose of these churches being partners in development is to ensure that both the members and those outside the church enjoy holistic salvation. This includes spirit, soul and body. To ensure that there is holistic salvation for total development, education is a key factor. Owusu-Ansah highlights some of the achievements of Ghanaian Pentecostal Charismatic Churches in socioeconomic development:

On the wider socio-economic front, the CMs (Charismatic Ministries) have developed social programs including the awarding of educational scholarships to 'brilliant but needy' members.¹ Pastor Otabil's ICCG runs a borehole water project in selected rural areas and as part of its 'Christ to the Rural Word' evangelistic campaigns, the Charismatic Evangelistic Ministry headed by Pastor Steve Mensah distributes items of clothing and other logistics in Ghana's rural communities.

(2018, 182)

One of the Pentecostal Churches that has become very conscious of its responsibility and partnering the state in development is Perez Chapel International. This church is led by Bishop Charles Agyinasare (formerly Agyin-Asare).

Brief history of Perez Chapel International

Some of the sources for this part of the research were gathered through personal conversation with the presiding bishop of the church, the assistant presiding bishop, the administrative bishop, the chief accountant and other relevant persons in the organisation.² Perez Chapel International, a Charismatic or Neo-Pentecostal Church, began in Tamale, the Northern Region of Ghana in 1987 by Bishop Charles Agyinasare. In 1994, the headquarters was moved from Tamale to Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Over the years, it has expanded to many communities in Ghana and beyond. The Perez Dome (the meeting place at the headquarters in Accra) has an estimated full seating capacity of 16,000. In June 2013, the name of the church was changed from the Word Miracle Church International to Perez Chapel International. Perez Chapel International operates both as a classical Pentecostal and a Charismatic Church. Its founder, Bishop Charles Agyinasare, was groomed in the Church of Pentecost after his conversion in Tamale. He received the call into ministry while in the Church of Pentecost. Even though from a classical Pentecostal background, he believes in the ordination of women, which is a Charismatic Church practice (Agyinasare, personal conversation 2018).

The lifestyle of Charles Agyinasare and other Perez Chapel pastors is worthy of emulation. This is because he has set a standard of integrity and accountability that has trickled down to the pastors in the church. As a policy, all the financial transactions of the church are handled by qualified accounting staff. Moreover, all the pastors and bishops are on salary, and spend only as authorised by a church board (Tackie, personal conversation 2018).³ Accountability to the church is an integral part of the processes. It ensures transparency in all aspects of financial transactions, thereby preventing pastoral staff from directly accessing church funds for personal gain (Tackie, personal conversation 2018). In all branches of Perez Chapel, there is a statutory handbook that ensures all follow the policy. In the church, there are both internal and external auditors that audit the accounts periodically (Tackie, personal conversation 2018). This ensures that the standards of accountability are strictly adhered to. Again, the

presiding bishop has set a good example as a man of transparency and integrity. He is also one of the top 10 givers of the church in terms of financial support (Acquah, personal conversation 2018).⁴

Perez Chapel has a television station called Precious TV which features Bishop Agyinasare. Francis Agyin-Asare (personal conversation 2018) believes the station has an audience of millions of people all over the world.⁵ The emphasis of Perez Chapel International is to bring total transformation to humankind based on the word of God (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). However, the church does not offer only spiritual solutions to the problems of humanity, but also believes in the development of the whole person. It is based on this premise that Perez Chapel undertakes many developmental projects. One key project that is aimed at bringing total and sustainable development to the people especially the youth is education. This is done through two programmes named 'Formal Education' and 'Youth Explosion' (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). Scholars like Peterson have a strong view about the indifference and uncaring attitudes of Pentecostals. He emphasises, '[t]hey use their divine empowering and faith building messages for self-serving purposes and neglect the social responsibilities that should accompany this phenomenon' (Peterson 1996, 299). In the case of Agyinasare, this is not true since he stopped taking a salary from the church when he reached the age of 50 and channelled it into taking care of the less privileged in society with beneficiaries in and outside the church (Agyinasare, personal conversation 2018). Additionally, the bishop has instituted a scholarship scheme for the needy but brilliant students known as the Agyinasare Foundation. Perez Chapel as an organisation also has a scholarship known as the Kenneth Narh Scholarship scheme. These scholarship schemes fit well into Perez Chapel's theology of development which aims at the total development of church and society, by meeting the physical, psychological and social needs of beneficiaries. This is because education is pivotal to the development of every individual or nation (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). The above shows that some Charismatic Churches have been very active in contributing to the socioeconomic development of the nation (Kalu 2008). Unemployed youth who otherwise would have been engaged in some form of vices in society are able to find viable ways of earning income. This agrees with the assertion of Asamoah-Gyadu (2005, 152) that 'the transformed lifestyle of believers translates into economic upliftment when resources that are spent (wasted) on unproductive activities are channelled into other economic gainful ventures'. Thus, Agyinasare's book *How Anybody Can Become Somebody* aims at motivating his readers to work hard and be determined to succeed through hard work and education. The book is part of Agyinasare's educational agenda in helping to transform the lives of the youths to become productive citizens. This agrees with the call by the World Bank and other agencies for collaboration between the international partners and faith-based organisations, so as to ensure sustainable development (Box 2009). The role of education in attaining sustainable development cannot be over-emphasised. Sustainable development cannot take place without human development that comes as the result of education. It is an important tool for achieving

global development. Education at whatever level is a key contributor to human development. Human development on the other hand becomes complete when it affects the 'whole being'. As defined by UNDP, Human Development Report:

Human development is about much more than rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about more than economic growth, which is only a means – if a very important one – of enlarging people's choices.

(2001, 9)

For example, an educated farmer will better understand the challenge of global warming and its effect on the quality of yield from his/her farm. This will help in appreciating the need to ensure that the environment is protected from harmful activities. No wonder emphasis was placed on education at the UN World Summit in Johannesburg (United Nations 2002). It was accepted that any direction of current and future education systems will be key to sustainable development. In the words of Nevin (2008, 50), '[e]ducation for sustainable development (ESD) promotes the development of the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and actions required to create a sustainable world, which ensures environmental protection and conservation, promotes social equity and encourages economic sustainability'. Even though the dominant theme in ESD is the environment, it addresses issues like poverty alleviation, citizenship, democracy and governance, corporate social responsibility, gender equality (Owusu-Ansah 2016). A Department of Economic and Social Affairs document by Le Blanc (2015) identified a link between education and sustainable development. It is therefore not surprising that to ensure holistic development, Perez Chapel International has made education a major priority in its quest to fulfil the Mission of God (*missio Dei*).

Educational and development projects of Perez Chapel International

The theology of development in Perez Chapel focuses on the total well-being of the individual (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). It has the biblical basis in 3 John 2 'Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers' (NKJV, 2013). The whole being must prosper and enjoy good health. In the words of Agyinasare (personal conversation 2018), 'this theology ensures that there is a constant cycle of development of both individual and society'. The leadership under Agyinasare has established some basic schools (junior high school level) known as Perez Academy. As a church, 'we aspire to have every branch that is ten years and above to have at least a basic school unit attached to the church. This will go a long way to meeting the educational needs in the communities where the

churches are established, especially the deprived communities' (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). Among them is the Perez Academy in Yeji, in Northern Region of Ghana, which is registered with the Ghana Education Service. The understanding of Perez Chapel and Agyinasare is that, through formal education, sustainable development can be achieved. This is evident by the provision of a six-classroom block unit to meet the infrastructural needs of the school in 2012 sponsored by the presiding bishop (Tackie, personal conversation 2018).

Currently, the school has offered employment for 17 teaching and non-teaching staff. The school has a population of 507 pupils (Yeji Pastor, personal conversation 2018). Perez Chapel International has another basic school which was purchased in 2010 by the La Branch of the church. Currently a 21-classroom block is ongoing to help admit the growing number of students (head teacher, personal conversation 2018). The passion to contribute to the sustainable development through quality graduate education received a great boost when the church purchased the Pan-African Christian University College formerly owned by the Church of God, now Perez University College. This gives credence to Burgess' (2015, 40) observation on current developmental and response to societal needs including education by Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. A personal conversation with the former rector of Perez University College indicates that currently the institution has three programmes: the Department of Business, School of Theology and Communication Studies (Sekyere, personal conversation 2018). He added that plans were far advanced to develop the infrastructure for the college to meet international standards so that it can be a channel for meeting the developmental needs of Ghanaians in particular and West Africa at large. Additional courses to be taught at the college include engineering, agricultural business with emphasis on mechanised farming, applied sciences, mathematics and statistics (Sekyere, personal conversation 2018). Acquah (2018) notes in a personal conversation that 'the college aims at turning out graduates that will contribute to sustainable development to ensure that no one is left behind as the world strives to meet the Sustainable Development Goals'.

Holistic development: agents of change

As stated earlier, holistic development is a development that takes into account the total growth needs of the individual or community (physical, mental, psychological, social and moral). Speckman (2016, 1087) defines it as 'a process of releasing an individual's potential so as to enable him/her to contribute to the welfare of the politeia/city'. Thus, the individual becomes an agent of positive change after he/she has been transformed. The change may come by various means and at different levels in a person's life, yet the youths are more likely to cause the changes the world is expecting if they are positively affected. The concept of holistic youth development includes activities that strengthen the whole young person (Fletcher 2014). This idea of holistic development as

expressed agrees with Freeman's (2013) holistic development term 'transformational development'. It is the development that seeks to transform the material, social and spiritual life of an individual. Thus, one of Agyinasare's approaches is to help empower the youths who are the future leaders through a programme dubbed 'Youth Explosion'. Perez Chapel seeks to provide the youths with the necessary tools – spiritual, social and physical – for sustainable development that is holistic. This is the aim of the Youth Explosion programme. Frederick Kakwata (2017) describes progressive Pentecostals as 'Christians who, inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus, seek to address holistically the spiritual, physical, and social needs of people in their community'.

The Youth Explosion programme

Youth Explosion is a non-denominational youth empowerment platform organised annually by Charles Agyinasare. The nature of the programme is such that everybody can participate irrespective of their religious background or persuasion. It was started on 24 July 2006 as Perez Chapel's contribution to youth empowerment in Ghana (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). Themes for the programme are carefully selected to meet the needs of the youths. Issues that are addressed span across moral, educational, physical, psychological and political concerns. The first conference was held at the International Conference Centre in Accra, Ghana, under the theme 'Breaking the power of bad addiction'. Some of the subsequent themes of the programme were as follows: 2007, 'Breaking the power of indiscipline'; 2008, 'Breaking the power of apathy'; 2009, 'Building an unshakable character for success'. Examining carefully the three examples mentioned, it is evident that the themes are reflective of the challenges confronting youths.

Addiction has become a global issue that is affecting humanity. The rate at which the youths, who are easily carried away by peer pressure, succumb to drug or substance abuse that leads to addiction has become a serious challenge (Gowing *et al.* 2015, 14). The reason for the 2016 theme of Youth Explosion was to assist the youths in overcoming the menace of substance abuse (Agyinasare, personal conversation 2018). The programme was aimed at helping them to contribute effectively to sustainable and holistic development. A participant attested to the positive influence the programme has had on his life: 'The programme has helped me to understand the danger of drug abuse and addiction, I am more than determined not to allow myself to be entangled with any sort of addiction whatsoever' (participant 6, Youth Explosion 2006). The underlying motif behind the organisation of Youth Explosion is addressing the vices, concerns and challenges of the youth in Ghanaian society in order to prepare them for future leadership (Acquah, personal conversation 2018).

Through the programme, the young people are informed, highly motivated and encouraged as the speakers inculcate in them the impetus for excellence to be able to contribute to socioeconomic development. A participant confessed after the 2009 edition, 'I have never seen myself as anyone who can become

successful but after this conference, I am so sure that no matter what comes my way, I will succeed and help my nation Ghana to develop' (participant 7, Youth Explosion 2009). Another participant also testifies how he has been set free from marijuana (substance abuse) due to his participation in Youth Explosion (participant 1, Youth Explosion 2010). Youth Explosion grew tremendously after the first two editions. The initial venue, the International Conference Centre, could no longer contain the number of participants. The conference venue was therefore moved to the Trade Fair Centre, La, Accra in 2008. In 2009, Youth Explosion was also held in Kumasi, the second biggest city in Ghana, the capital of the Ashanti Region. Due to its success and influence, the Youth Explosion programme is currently held in Accra, Takoradi, Kumasi and Tamale (these are the four biggest cities in Ghana). The long-term vision of Agyinasare is to hold the programme in each of the 10 regions of Ghana. He also wants to institutionalise the programme into a club to function in junior high schools, senior high schools and tertiary institutions throughout the country (Agyinasare, personal conversation 2018).

Motivation and encouragement are keys in moving people from one level of understanding to the other. The youths are usually influenced when they are motivated by people they consider as role models (Bush *et al.* 2001). Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995) suggest that a role model is a person who is perceived by others as worthy of imitation and who may or may not have personal contact with the people who perceive him/her as a role model. Leadership experts like John Maxwell (1993), Sam Chand and Murphey Cecil (2003), Myles Munroe (2005) and Brian Tracy (2014) all agree that influence is one of the major elements in leadership and this of course must be positive influence. The youths are influenced when they meet their role models in seminars and programmes. The idea of Agyinasare is to give the youths an opportunity to interact with people who have been successful in their various fields of endeavour (personal conversation 2018). The Youth Explosion programme therefore draws resource persons from different sectors of life to talk about issues of national interest. These are people of experience and expertise who will have a positive influence on the youths. The subjects of interest include career counselling and moral, relationship, educational, political and career issues. Organisations that have played important roles in youth development and nurturing have been involved in Youth Explosion since its inception. Such organisations include: Ghana AIDS Commission, Child's Right International, the National Youth Council and the Scripture Unions. Moreover, education is essential in the development of youths. As stated earlier, sustainable development cannot take place without education. Based on this assertion, some educational institutions have also been represented to give the youths an opportunity to interact with academics and fellow students. As part of the activities, an educational fair is organised for institutions that are both academic and vocational to exhibit their products, services and activities to the youths. The youths and participants are guided on the enrolment processes and procedures. Some of the educational institutions which have participated in Youth Explosion between 2006 and 2016 include

Central University, Regent University College, Data Link University College, Tropical Haven, Sikkim Municipal University College, Wisconsin University College, 2nd Image and Beauty School and Cake Techniks (Acquah, personal conversation 2018).

The Presiding Bishop of Perez Chapel International is one of the key Pentecostal/Charismatic leaders in Ghana. Consequently, some of his colleagues have been resource persons for the Youth Explosion programme. This gives the programme the 'non-denominational and multidimensional' status. Churches that have been participating in the programmes are Perez Chapel International, Victory Bible Church, Global Revival Ministries, Methodist Church of Ghana, Anglican Church of Ghana, Presbyterian Church of Ghana and many others. The programmes are structured to be exciting and educational. The activities include lectures and entertainment with issues on health, entrepreneurship and politics and are designed to encourage socialisation. Some notable resource persons from different walks of life who were invited to address the participants at the Youth Explosion programme in 2008 include Rev. Dr Mensa Otabil; Mr Yussif Ibrahim, Drug Abuse Counsellor; Prof. Mike Aquaye; Bishop Tackie Yarboi; Mr Kofi Addison, CEO, Mature Leadership Consultant; Bishop E. A. Sackey; His Excellency the late former Vice President of Ghana, Alihu Mahama; His Excellency John Dramani Mahama; the former President of Ghana, Rev. Dr Robert Ampiah Kofi; Rev. Dr Ebenezer Markwei; Rev. Kyre Searcy (USA); Rev. Robert Andoh; Dr Paa Kwesi Ndoum and Ms Peggy Addo, Human Resource Manager, Graphic Communications Group. These are people of immense experience and expertise in their various fields of endeavour. Their experiences are shared in lectures and symposia with the opportunity for questions and answers. Available information shows that the programme has grown from year to year in terms of attendance and the content (Acquah, personal conversation 2018). The resource persons have influenced the youths so much that, as one participant puts it, 'my life since the attendance of Youth Explosion has never been the same' (participant 5, Youth Explosion 2015). In order to ascertain the positive influence of the Youth Explosion, interviews were conducted with some of the participants.

Interviews on the influence of Youth Explosion

Youth Explosion attracts young people from all religious persuasions (Christians, non-Christians and Muslims) alike. The youth in Ghana who are aware of the programme look forward to it, as one participant attests: 'I am always looking for Youth Explosion, I wish it will be held here in every month, God bless Bishop Agyinasare for the great foresight' (participant 4, Youth Explosion 2010). Participants of the programme have benefited in diverse ways. After the programme in Kumasi in 2014, one of the participants testified how she had learned to structure her daily activities, and the orderliness that has come to her life due to lessons learned in one of the sessions. She opined, 'these days, I write down my activities in a scheduled format, and try as much as possible to follow it. At the

end of every day, I go through my checklist to see whether I have been able to fulfil my plans for the day' (participant 3, Youth Explosion 2014). The greatest joy of another participant was the fact that he has been able to speak to a public figure in Ghana. He stressed: 'In Ghana if you don't know anybody you cannot get access to talk to the big men, but Youth Explosion has made it possible for me to talk to a former Vice President; I am excited' (participant 8, Youth Explosion 2010). Life principles and effective skills development are some of the things the youth learn during the programme. Another participant in the 2013 edition confessed, 'they have taught on some life principles which will help everyone especially the youth, so I would encourage everyone to make it to this programme, and truly, whoever makes it to this programme would be a blessing' (participant 2, Youth Explosion 2013). Self-identity and confidence are keys in reaching one's purpose in life. At Youth Explosion, experience counsellors have the opportunity to interact with and counsel young people who have low self-esteem due to their family backgrounds and the environments in which they are nurtured. Baumeister *et al.* (2003) emphasise that *self-image* (*self-concept*) comprises a value for one's self and respect; made up of which is the feeling of one's own value and the belief to have the right to happiness and success. A participant affirms that through the programme his self-confidence has been built up, ready to face the challenges in this life for success. A lady who has been part of Youth Explosion since its inception in Kumasi testified that:

I think it's been so much a blessing because it has impacted my life and changed my way of thinking. I think that I can do something no matter my age. And especially today, I have been motivated primarily by Nana Bediako's speech. If at the age of 21 years, he was a millionaire in pounds, I don't know what I can't do with the help of God, so I'm sure I'm going on for the best and am on course.

(participant 9, Youth Explosion 2010)

The resource persons have served as role models for the youths. A participant in Tamale explained how she has been impacted by the programme. She stressed:

Youth Explosion has been very impactful. It has given me the opportunity to learn a lot of things about life, and how the big men like the pastors that we see around, the bishops, how they were able to go through the odds and to come out and to make it big. So, they've impacted us, and inspired us, to be able to go on and to move on despite all the hindrances and the challenges that we go through. If we hold on and we move on as they did, we'll also get to where they got to. So, it has been very impactful.

(participant 10, Youth Explosion 2010)

Activities like music, choreography, praise and worship, entertainment, talent hunts and reality shows help to unearth the talents of participants.⁶ The youths play important roles in the activities of the programme, serving as

encouragement to others who are school dropouts. A participant testified how through Youth Explosion she has gathered the courage to go back to school after dropping out due to pregnancy and childbirth (participant 11, Youth Explosion 2016). With the purchase of the university college in 2015, Perez Chapel International could not organise Youth Explosion in 2017 and 2018. The reasons given by the presiding bishop and initiator of the programme is that much finance from the church is being channelled into infrastructure development at the college, which puts much constraint on the finances of the church. Attention is now focused on human resource development and youth empowerment at the university college.

Conclusion

Sustainable development is critical to every country. Over the years, organisations and institutions have contributed to the success of programmes and policies of development in their various countries. SDGs hold the future for the entire world to eradicate extreme poverty. It is expected that all hands will be on deck in contributing to efforts that focus on sustainable development. Religious organisations (church and para-church organisations) need to work in diverse ways towards social development. The history of Christianity in Ghana records many development initiatives by the Mission Churches such as the building of schools, hospitals and clinics. Records suggests that much work has been done by the Christian community in Ghana in terms of human resource development, capacity building and assisting the less privileged to secure a means of income.

In recent years, Ghanaian Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches have been involved in social development, which was not the case some years back. Mention can be made of churches like International Central Gospel Church, which has one of the top private universities in Ghana, Lighthouse Chapel International, which has built a hospital, Action Faith Chapel International, which has a university college, and Perez Chapel International, which has acquired a university college and some elementary schools. This study has looked at the contribution of Perez Chapel International to sustainable development. Apart from the Perez University College, which serves as a training and educational institution in Ghana, and other primary schools, the founder of Perez Chapel International, Charles Agyinasare, embarks on an annual capacity building programme which empowers the Ghanaian youth, Christians and non-Christians alike, to unleash their potential for productive activities. The Youth Explosion programme has had a tremendous influence on Ghanaian youth. Development is a critical issue which needs the attention and contribution of all. The Pentecostal Churches are therefore not exempted from this important task.

Notes

- 1 Our own explanation in brackets.
- 2 Detailed information about the interviews including dates can be found at the end of the chapter.
- 3 Robert Tackie, a qualified and renowned chartered accountant who works with the State Judiciary Service, is chief accountant of Perez Chapel International.
- 4 Rev. Raymond Acquah is the Bishop Elect in charge of the church's administration, known as the Administrative Bishop.
- 5 Francis Agyin-Asare is the Director of Precious TV.
- 6 Even though the programme is Christian in nature, youth from other religious persuasions participate. Muslims who attend the programme sing along with the other participants and dance to the Christian music as well.

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- Sekyere, Owusu, interview by Sylvia Owusu-Ansah, 12 January 2018.
- Tackie, Robert, interview by Sylvia Owusu-Ansah, 10 October 2018.
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