The September edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter profiles ICSW activities in the West African region. Starting with a brief analysis of some salient demographic trends, attention is focused on agricultural development and food security issues in the context of climate change impacts in the region. Another concern addressed in this issue of the Newsletter is the situation regarding persons with disabilities in Ghana.

As usual, we also inform our readers about the new books and provide useful links.

Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director of ICSW and Editor of the Newsletter

continued on page 2
Concern for “the people” is at the heart of the historic declaration on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that the 193-member United Nations General Assembly adopted on September 25, 2015. Underscoring that emphasis is the fact that “people” is the first of 5 areas identified by the declaration as being of critical importance for humanity and the planet. The other areas are “planet”, “prosperity”, “peace” and “partnerships.” Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets are expected to guide and drive global development efforts through 2030.

With respect to the people, the 2030 Agenda seeks to “end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.” It aims to empower people who are vulnerable, especially children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants. Member States resolved to work towards meeting the special needs of people living in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism. The declaration serves as a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” and a plan “of the people, by the people and for the people” (paragraph 52).

Two years into the life of that path-breaking international document, there is evidence of certain challenges and limitations in reaching the primary focus of the 2030 Agenda-- “the people”. First of all, knowledge of this international document remains very limited. Even in more developed regions with high educational and professional attainment, many never heard of it or profess not to care about the Agenda. For example, a recent report from a meeting of the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network confirms that the staff of most corporations are not even aware of the SDGs. The World Economic Forum’s 2017 World Shapers Survey of young people aged 18 to 35 years found that 44.7 per cent said they were not sure or did not know about the SDGs. That fact alone is a source of concern, given that it is the young people of today who will be bearing the brunt of climate instability in the near future and who might be considered the standard-bearers in adaptation efforts.

Apart from that, this shortcoming is worrisome, given that over the 15-year projected life course of the 2030 Agenda, practitioners and policy makers will not only have to meet the needs of the world’s existing 7.4 billion people in 2015, but also the 1.7 billion yet unborn but who will be added through 2030.

Africa, a region that already faces strong demographic pressures, where large segments of the population lack access to basic infrastructure and services, and where levels of illiteracy are high while education opportunities and levels are compromised for many, will experience a substantial increase in its population during the period of SDG implementation, including some vulnerable segments. That increase cannot but impinge on the 2030 Agenda’s stated intent to “leave no one behind”, reaching the people and securing for them the benefits of sustainable development.

According to estimates and projections of the Population Division of the United Nations, between 2015 and 2030 (the period covered by the 2030 Agenda), the world’s population is expected to increase by 15 per cent – from some 7.3 billion to 8.6 billion. Developed

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1 See: Report Asian Venture Philanthropy Network

2 Please refer to World Economic Forum’s 2017 World Shapers Survey
regions will see an increase of about 3 percent, and developing regions will grow by 18 percent. The population of the least developed countries with high levels of poverty and lacking social services will increase by 39 percent. In general, the population is expected to increase by smaller percentages in other world regions, except in Europe where a slight decline will occur.

Africa’s population growth will be particularly rapid and threatens to complicate and derail the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Between 2015 and 2030 the region will see the number of people grow by 43 per cent – from 1.2 to 1.7 billion. In sub-Saharan Africa, the growth will be from 969 million to 1.4 billion people (46 per cent increase). That means that in Africa in 2030, there will be just about one additional person for every 2 people that were there at the start of the pursuit of the SDGs in 2015. The implications of that demographic challenge for attaining the SDGs and for reaching “the people,” especially those furthest behind, could be far-reaching.

The consequences of high population growth for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda’s goals on the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the planet are well-recognized and often referred to. Equally important are the implications of population trends on the achievement of the other SDGs, especially those on poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, decent work and peace and justice. While theoretically, the expected population pressure in Africa could trigger a demographic dividend and spur development within the region, that is by no means certain, especially in the African context where there are weak opportunities for education, skills development and decent work. There is indeed evidence that much of what is often perceived as a pure demographic dividend may, in fact, be an education dividend.

Given that demography might be a politically sensitive subject, the 2030 Agenda does not address demography specifically and makes only one action-oriented mention of population trends by noting in paragraph 34 that --“We will also take account of population trends and projections in our national rural and urban development strategies and policies.” If the saying that “demography is destiny” is correct, then Africa’s demographic trends could well be its destiny with respect to the future of the SDGs in the region. An urgent and proactive approach is required for addressing the headwinds that population trends in the region present. Considerable investment will be needed simply to keep up with demographically driven increasing demands for health care, education, jobs and other basic services and infrastructure for a rapidly growing population.

It is important to note that, although the largest part of the increase in population in Africa will be the result of births (which will increase by 11 per cent between 2015-2020 and 2025-2030), the increase in the size of the population in the region will also partially be the result of greater longevity. The proportion of the population aged over 50 years is expected to increase from 11 to 13 per cent over the period, adding to the challenges of Africa’s youth bulge, newer pressures from an increasing older population. Intergenerational solidarity might be tested under the new circumstances, but it remains a pre-requisite for sustaining social cohesion in the quest for a “society for all”.

Reaching and serving Africa’s growing and increasingly diverse population and ensuring that all people reap the benefits of the forward-looking international plans embodied in the 2030 Agenda will require a multi-pronged approach. At the national level it will require the efforts of society as a whole. Addressing high fertility by ensuring access to family planning and reproductive health services is a necessary and important part of interventions. However, given the fact that the momentum for much of the population growth in the next 15 years or so has already been created by the large cohorts of women and men in the reproductive age groups, policies will be needed to accommodate and mitigate the negative effects of the rapid growth of the population on the achievement of the SDGs. Increased and targeted investments in high-quality and relevant education, including efforts to incorporate the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in school curricula at all levels, will be of critical importance. Civil society must also be actively engaged in the design and implementation of interventions in order to ensure that they are relevant to society and
reach sub-populations that are the furthest behind.

Climate Change, Food Security and Well-Being in West Africa: what role for civil society?
By Christopher Dapaah and Sergei Zelenev

Growing climate instability
Climate change is now affecting every country on every continent. It is disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and, potentially, even more tomorrow. Climate instability has become a factor in social unrest in many African countries, often leading to the displacement of people. The emergence of a particularly vulnerable and growing group -- environmental refugees -- willing, in their desperate search for safety and livelihood, to cross the deserts and the seas, often at great risk to their lives, have become the visible manifestation of a bigger problem and a sad part of the African social landscape.

Building the resilience of rural and urban communities in the face of climate change and identifying some emergency priority measures for adaptation require the joint efforts of farmers, governments and the economic community at large. Civil society organizations (CSOs) working at the community level play an important role in those efforts, trying hard to provide assistance to people affected by climate change, but they face numerous constraints, primarily inadequate resources. In order to achieve better results, the CSOs must work together with other stakeholders, extending the scope of cooperation, exploring new pathways out of rampant poverty and helping with adaptation.

Agriculture remains the major source of livelihood for the absolute majority of the people living in West Africa. But many small-scale farmers are very poor, producing at close to subsistence levels. That is well illustrated by the great disparity between the contribution of the agricultural sector to the regional GDP (35 per cent) and the share of the labour force in agriculture (60 per cent)\(^3\). The food security of small-scale farmers remains at a very low level; even when they are entrepreneurial in mind-set; they have inadequate access to new technologies and market. Climate change is an aggravating factor: in terms of both climate means and climate variability; it represents an obvious threat to farmers in the region, potentially leading to such impacts as lower yields, reduction in farm income, and eventually, reduced welfare.

Agriculture in the region, covering a wide range of agro-ecological zones and mostly rain-fed, remains highly sensitive to climate change, making rural communities vulnerable. Rapidly growing population is also increasing pressure on the scarce natural resources. An improvement in irrigation facilities for farmers would therefore help reduce the effect of rainfall and climate variability. The increase in the public-sector investment in new, improved seeds and new technologies could lead to better performance under poor weather conditions, helping to offset the negative effects of changing rainfall patterns on crops. This would not only boost the sector’s contribution to GDP, it would also alleviate poverty in the rural areas.

In order to stabilize and improve livelihoods, as well as to respond to the critical impacts of climate change, a number of policy measures can be initiated and/or developed. Among the possible adaptation measures are identification of drought-tolerant crop varieties, better irrigation and water management. An operational agro-meteorological information system can provide farmers with advice and warning during the planning phase and the growing season.

Civil-society organizations in the region have drawn attention to the fact that quite often Ministries of Agriculture in West Africa emphasize food production for commercial use or for export, with the respective policy tools aimed at commercially profitable cash crops rather than the nourishment of the vulnerable

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3 West African agriculture and climate change: A comprehensive analysis
groups of the population. The objectives of food security must be acknowledged as a policy priority, along with the respective policy mix aimed at the welfare of population, including rural employment schemes and integration into the regional market. The increasing incidence of extreme weather conditions is a factor that adds to uncertainty for farmers regarding crops and market trends, and should not be overlooked when policy measures aimed at food security are conceived and implemented. Even if undernourishment has seen a modicum of reduction in the region, it still remains a huge challenge for the millions of people.

Social implications
Owing to economic and demographic growth, the middle classes in the region have been expanding and receiving increased attention from policymakers and the private sector. Rapid urbanization, with people migrating from rural to urban areas, a trend towards a decline in the share of agriculture in GDP, the gradual rise of a modern industrial and growth economy, and a demographic transition from high to lower rates of birth and death, are part of the structural transformation in West Africa. But that transformation is incomplete, and the four interrelated processes are progressing at different paces, with urbanization as the most visible, with little change in the sectoral composition of the economy, and only three countries, namely, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana moving rapidly towards clearly lower fertility rates.

Gender issues are most important in the context of food security, agricultural production and rural development. It is estimated that 64% of women in the region are engaged in the agricultural sector, and they produce more than 80% of food resources in West Africa. However, they face wide-spread discrimination in rural development projects, in access to land and in the labour market. Adaptation activities are impossible without engaging women, and civil society has a vital role to play in the fight for gender equality and promoting the inclusion and participation of women in society.

With still rapid population growth, the number of young people entering the labour market each year is on the increase. The deeply-rooted informal sector in the economy and the very high level of youth unemployment remain a huge challenge in all West African countries. Improvements in the organization of small-scale farms, with better access to capital and new technology, could contribute to creating rural employment and promote rural development.

The sustainable utilization of all resources and the commercialization of activities in the sector, with market-driven growth in mind, have been attempted in several countries, but results are highly uneven. The education of farmers and the improvement of the human resource base in the agricultural sector remain among the sector’s priorities. Since agricultural marketing is a big challenge in Central and West Africa, there is an urgent need for spearheading the development of agricultural marketing policies at the ministerial level, including policy direction to address the market integration of small-scale farms, and for ensuring that such policies are consistently implemented. In addition, policy efforts should be combined with the recruitment and training of extension-service officers, particular taking into account the emergence of new technologies in that area, as well as modern agricultural extension-service methods. Further efforts to improve the existing market infrastructure, grading and standardization systems, and market intelligence, and to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders along the value chain, could facilitate strengthening the linkages between agro-business firms and small holder farmers.

In some countries such as Ghana new government schemes have been introduced to coordinate climate change adaptation. For example, the existing environment and climate-change units and regional environment desks within the relevant ministry are being strengthened to coordinate climate chance adaptation under the Management of Land and Environment Programme. Under that programme, a grants scheme has been proposed to promote sustainable land and environment management. It targets 80 districts and 800 service providers and

5 Ibid
adopters. That programme, one of the interventions proposed by the government, will go a long way to enhance the agricultural sector if well implemented.

In several West African countries increasing awareness of the new threats associated with climate change resulted in identification of emergency priority measures for adaptation in their National Adaptation Programmes of Action, focused on agriculture, food security and water resource management. New risks from climate change require joint actions on the part of all stakeholders on multiple fronts, where reduction of persistent poverty and socio-economic inequality is definitely a priority. Civil-society organizations have the potential to expand the scope of collective action, adding valuable insights not only about the nature of the existing constraints and challenges but also about existing opportunities on the road to sustainable development.

### Legal steps and existing discrimination

According to the World Health Organization, about 15% of the world’s population are persons with disabilities (PWDs). Less than 20% of them live in developed countries, whilst the majority (80%) are found in the developing countries.

In Ghana, a developing country with a population of about 24 million, an estimated 20% of the disability population has significant (severe) disability, according to data recently compiled by the National Council on Persons with Disability (see table alongside). Of note is the fact that there are various types, classes and degrees of disability, generally requiring differing types of support or intervention. Whilst an estimated 25% of the disability population has a hearing impairment (engendering communication challenges), about 13 percent have severe physical disabilities impacting mobility in the environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Pop’n</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>624,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>720,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory, Concentration</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1,056,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Care Limitation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Ailment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>720,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism Spectrum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>240,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4,800,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Ghana’s Disability Law, passed in 2006, seeks to end discrimination against people with disabilities. In 2007, a year after the PWD Act was passed, Ghana signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) and the Optional Protocol, and on March 13, 2012, the Ghanaian Parliament ratified the UNCRPD and the Optional Protocol. According to recent report prepared by the Ghana Federation of the Disabled on the implementation of the country’s Disability Act, the Act falls short of certain provisions provided in the UN Convention. The report stated that “women with disabilities”, the rights of “children with disabilities”, the inherent “right to life,” and the right to protection and safety in “situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies” are not expressly addressed in Ghana’s PWD Act (2013); though some aspects are broadly covered by Ghana’s Constitutional provisions.

According to the Ghana Federation of the Disabled, persons with disability in Ghana are usually a penurious, downgraded group, constrained by lack of access to public health care, education, and other social services that

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would, in theory, support and protect people with disabilities.

Even though the passage of the Act has been very relevant in terms of promoting the rights of PWDs, not enough has been done to increase their access to public facilities and grant them equal opportunities for employment. For example, the Act also asserts the need for public services to be available and accessible to PWDs but few relevant changes have been implemented.

Inclusive education remains only a dream for such people, which represents a large discrepancy between policy and practice.

Persons with disability are seen by the community mostly as people who are not productive and are therefore not able to contribute to the development of society or the country as a whole. Even worse, existing customs are hostile to such people, as disability is often seen as a “curse”, condemning PWDs to marginalization and exclusion.

Despite the legal rights that exist in the books, this group of people remains one of the most vulnerable in society. By and large stricken with abject poverty, they are considered a liability to the government, which is expected to provide for them or assist them both economically and socially. In reality, very little actual protection against discrimination is offered.

**Money for the weakest and unexpected hurdles.**

In the desire to better the lot of such people, civil-society organizations and the disability movement in Ghana have persuaded the authorities in Ghana to allocate a percentage of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) to PWDs. As a result, PWDs are now entitled to 2% (per cent) of the DACF. That 2% from the DCAF allocated to PWDs (District Assembly Disability Set-Aside/Allocation or DDSA) in each district is intended to help reduce unemployment and poverty among PWDs. The objectives of the 2% DDSA are:

1. To support the income-generating activities of individual persons with disability as a means of economic empowerment.
2. To provide educational support for children, students and trainees with disability.
3. To build the capacity of PWDs in the districts so as to enable them to advocate and assert their rights and undertake awareness-raising and sensitization on disability issues.
4. To support persons with disability so as to enable them to have access to technical aid and other assistive devices and equipment.

The DDSA is supposed to be administered by a committee set up to manage the fund for the PWDs in each district. That committee has the responsibility for vetting, assessing and approving applications received from PWDs or PWD groups and for monitoring and supervising the utilization of the funds as its main functions.

In spite of the funds allocated for the PWDs, studies have shown that their lives have not improved significantly. In practice, fewer than one-third of the sampled PWD associations had access to the funds. According to the study, the mandated Disability Fund Management Committees (DFMCs), which are supposed to review applications for funds, were in many cases not set up.

However, considering that the total annual DDSA in recent years was only about ₡8M, which corresponds to an average amount per PWD of only ₡1.60 per year, the expectation that this level of funding can offer significant change in the short term may be woefully unrealistic.

**Civil-society organizations and disability issues.**

Facing various forms of discrimination, many people among the disabled have been unable to assert their rights. Persons with disability face numerous challenges ranging from a low level of self-esteem, limited mobility, high dependency and poverty, and the lack of access to education, health and other social services. Organizations of persons with disabilities and civil-society organizations (CSOs) have made some strides in pushing forward the disability agenda, but weak organizational capacity and limited experience in advocacy have hampered their momentum.

The civil-society organizations keep drawing attention to human rights violation affecting
this group, and to the fact that they are not included in the planning and decision-making process, and also cannot express their voice for fairness and equity owing to capacity challenges.

The contributions of CSOs to the localization of the SDGs include but are not limited to building capacity, raising awareness on development issues, sharing knowledge and helping to facilitate dialogue between marginalized groups and local decision-makers. Those contributions are paramount in promoting the social inclusion of this vulnerable group. Despite these and many more complementary roles in society, the shrinking of the spaces available for civil-society organizations in the Government’s governing machineries has been an issue of concern in recent years. The Government, NGOs and development partners should provide resources to sensitize the communities on disability issues, so as to reduce the incidence of discrimination against this group, promote positive attitudes towards disability and reduce stigmatization within the community.

The Government should fully implement existing legal and regulatory frameworks and conventions so as to ensure that the issues regarding PWDs are mainstreamed into the development agenda of the country.

**Useful resources and links—the finds of the month**

**What about young people not in employment, not in education, not in training?** *Francois Joseph Cabral*

NOPOOR Policy brief, May 2017

The purpose of this paper, a NOPOOR Policy brief, is to assess the phenomenon of Senegalese young people who are neither in education, nor in employment, nor in training (NEET). It addresses the following questions: what is the extent of NEET? What are the key drivers of this phenomenon? What type of policy can be implemented to fight against it?


**Is Nigeria’s Social Protection on the cusp of transformation?**

*Development Pathways, 17 August 2017*

The article written by Gbenga Shadare for *Development Pathways* considers targeting and universality issues in social protection in Nigeria.

For information: [http://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/resources/nigerias-social-protection-cusp-transformation](http://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/resources/nigerias-social-protection-cusp-transformation)
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