

Changing Seasons - Changing Industries: Part 3

Dear Friends,

In my September and October articles, I have been discussing how the global changes in weather patterns have affected Ghana and the industries that are a part of our communities. This article is more focused on the effect that these changes have on the movement of goods, services and people. In Ghana, the weather has a big impact on how we live and work.

The rains have caused terrible havoc to our already bad roads that are used by people and vehicles. Many roads in the country are described as *feeder roads*, and such roads are simply broad paths created by bulldozers that clear the plantation, so vehicles can move over them. No asphalt is put over such roads. Therefore, one will find them as compacted red soil or sand, which, when there has been no rain, they are already difficult to drive over. But the roads become almost impossible during and after, because the rain turns the surface into slippery mud.

When heavy laden cargo vehicles loaded with timber and farm produce go over these roads, some get stuck in the mud. Then they are forced to wait for the rains to stop, and the ground to harden again before they can be moved. Some of these roads, because they are *feeder roads*, where they cross streams (and rivers), don't have real bridges. Planks of wood boards and trees are put across them to serve as bridges. Because the rainy patterns have changed, the challenge that has emerged is when and how to *fix* these roads. Over the last three years most of such roads have been left unattended to, without any maintenance carried out on them, adding to the already dire predicament of the people.

If the people are unable to move from place to place as a result of the bad roads and the obstructed paths that lead to the market and other places of work, the suffering of the people increases.

The cry from the masses continue to go on without being heeded by our government. Almost everywhere when people cry for help and they don't get attention, they threaten the political party in power with a *boycott of the elections* and/or voting them out of power. The government counters this with the explanation that it's the climate change that is affecting the implementation of the policies that relate to the environment and people's circumstances. And yet, nothing changes. The working-class people suffer.

When the people are able to reach the road and get vehicles that will take them to the market - to sell their goods - or go to work, they encounter unannounced increases in **transport fares**. The transport fare is a charge for traveling from one place to another, often in a taxi or bus. The fare is paid by the passenger. Public transportation is common in Ghana. The problems with transport fares become confusing and diverse. The government has an agency set up to handle it, but there are *Drivers Unions* that rally for, and promote their own concerns outside of the governmental directives. These are some of the issues that create challenges to a fair regulation of the fares.

When the transport fares go up for any reason, the traders also automatically adjust the price of their goods and services. In recent times the cost of basic food items has shot up more than thirty (30%) percent.

So, the people are paying more for transportation and more for putting food on the table for their families. No wonder the children of Akrampa and communities like it have huge challenges feeding their children. All of this is exacerbated by the rising cost of fuel (petrol, diesel) on the market. In the **Ghanaian situation**, the moment fuel prices trend upward, prices of goods and services also automatically change, without regard to the already existing hardship of the people.

We continue to pray that world leaders would lead their countries in the best policies to respect the beautiful Earth that our Lord gave to us, and to care for the people that they govern, especially the least of these, who need so much.

Please keep all of Ghana, and our mission village of Akrampa, in your own prayers. Thank you.

Blessings,

Pastor Ben Wilson