

MY EXPERIENCE DURING THE CORONA VIRUS OUTBREAK

Frank Ebo Sagoe,(PhD candidate)

UESTC

Author: (Frank Ebo Sagoe, 2016 PhD student of School of Management Science and Economics (SME) and (CWAS), Centre for West African Studies of the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC), on partial scholarship.

During the novel coronavirus epidemic, I was gripped with fear and torn between going back to my country and staying in China. Being on partial scholarship without stipend and finding yourself in an epidemic situation, when you have to go through quarantine for an indefinite period of time as a foreigner is really a very difficult experience .A lot of things will keep running through your mind. Do you give up and return to your country or be hopeful that things would be alright? And is it even a safe decision to make?

Despite the difficult time, I kept working on my studies and trusted in the Chinese government's ability to solve this problem in the shortest possible time as we continue to hope that life returns back to normal. On daily basis, I followed the news on wechat with anxiety. Streets had deserted with no vehicles, as I could see looking through my window. Friends and family back home kept calling and texting to find out if I was ok. I told them once I obeyed School rules and stay in my dormitory then there is nothing to worry about. I continued to give them word of hope that China will be able to win this fight.

I first heard about the epidemic around the second week in January. News went fast on wechat groups with images of the rising number of infections on daily basis. For the first time I heard about "SAR's" and the Middle East syndrome.

After the Wuhan municipal government decided to shut down all transportation on January 23, a mere two days before the Lunar New Year, I was more worried about how I was going to survive with just a little money left on me. Fortunately I had some masks but going out my school was out of the plans, more so school rules didn't even allows that. Soon, stores were closed altogether. As more people became infected, government measures became stricter.

I became even more worried when I started having lung and heart discomfort. I went to the school hospital and was taken through CT scan and series of blood tests. The drugs got finished but the situation had still not improved. I stayed in my bed most of the time and really didn't know what was going to be my faith next. One day an African sister, I shared my health situation with asked me to boil water with garlic, ginger, lemon and a certain plant called prekese(an immune system boosting plant) which grows mainly in Africa. My situation improved and I started working harder on my studies.

I had come all the way to China to research on how to bring high speed rail investment to Ghana and West Africa. I applied for admission in my school and forgot to fill the scholarship form which could have helped me receive some stipend. The interview panel of UESTC on their visit to Ghana reposed confidence good in me. I am confident that high speed rail (HSR) investment can help save lives that is struggling to control the rate of road related deaths.

Statistics from the WHO reveals that, road traffic **accidents in Ghana** have killed 46,284 between 1991 and 2018. HSR has better safety record than road transport (Fang 2015), a major reason why Ghana, currently the headquarters of Africa's 3 trillion US Free trade zone needs to adopt the introduction of HSR to help in effective socio-economic development. The Ghanaian government is determined to upsurge annual tourists figures from one million to 8 million per year by 2027. The travel industry in Ghana stands at a projection of raising \$8.3 billion a year by 2027, as reported by CNN.

Most of these deaths happen on long distance travel, but I'm confident that (HSR) can help reduce this canker to the lowest possible level. I was so pleased, when I still managed to get a tuition free scholarship and willing accepted a study leave without pay agreement from my work place in Ghana to embark on what I called the adventure of my life time. I believe upon my return to Ghana, I would be in a more prepared situation as the youngest Presidential staffer with PhD and could be useful with my specialty in transportation safety.

I was torn between going back to Ghana or staying to see how the Chinese government was going to bring the situation under control. At the end I have been able to do two key write ups on HSR, among 5 others on transport safety, which are almost at the final stages of publication, first of its kind in West Africa and a very good thesis that did not only focus on high speed rail but transport safety in general, while spending time in my dormitory day and night. I got an online part time teaching assistant job offer from my University, which was more than joy to me as this job offer brought me a sigh of relieve. This would at least help me meet basic needs until I finish my studies and go back to Ghana as the youngest PhD holder at the Office of President, Ghana, attached to the Senior Minister's office. I also landed a job offer from Hangxiao Steel structure, one of China's leading skyscraper building companies to become their African representative. I managed to secure them a top contract which would have begun if not for the epidemic situation in Ghana. I believe I'm in a good position to play a major role with the roads and belt initiative by the hard working government of China in Africa now, as a staff of the President of Ghana, on study leaves. I'm so proud of my School, UESTC for expressing confidence in me. I stand in solidarity with China and the world in this fight.



Me and my mentor. Professor Francis Allotey(The Inventor of the Allotey constant, Ghana, Princeton University and one of Africa's greatest mathematician of all times).



Me with Mr. Chen Fei, Vice President of Hangxiao steel structure when I took them to Ghana Embassy in Beijing to discuss their intention to begin operations in Ghana and Africa, few weeks before the epidemic started



Group photo with some officials of Ghana Embassy in Beijing and Hangxiao steel structure



With Chenghua District PSB officials when they met the Chengdu press at the new year community event to promotion cultural activity with foreigners. A few days before the epidemic broke out



From right is Ms Li, Director of the Exit& Entry Administration Department of Chenghua PSB & Mr Rong, Police in charge of Shuangfu Residential Community, Chengdu