

Interview: Citizens Are Stakeholders In Governance

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Dr. Joy Alemazung is a scholar of Political Science and the Chair of the African Good Governance Network, with headquarter in Bonn, Germany. After holding a series of meetings in South Africa, Ethiopia and Cameroon, this Associate Lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences in Bremen, Germany and Senior Analyst at the Global Governance Institute in Brussels, Belgium, granted this exclusive interview to *Africanews.com*, where he explained the insight of his network while noting, amongst other issues that the problems of the African people, stem, primarily from inadequate information.

Excerpts:

What is the African Good Governance Network, AGGN, about?

The AGGN was founded in 2007 by the former President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Horst Kohler. The purpose is to rally graduates and experts of African descent from German universities and ensure that they promote good governance and democracy in the African continent.

How is membership into the AGGN obtained?

I was selected as a member in 2008, one year after its creation. Members are nominated by a university or research institution. A selection process is pursued, including an interview. Every year, ten fellows are selected into the AGGN.

What do you intend to achieve?

In our own little corner, we look forward to apply the skills and knowledge acquired in Europe into the various facets of our African society, especially in the democratisation process. Our primary approach is to establish cooperation partners with other institutions in Africa, beginning with research and publications with the objective to get the local population informed. We are not interested in giving people readymade literature from Europe, but to make use of the local realities in the various countries in the continent. We want to encourage people to read. We have a lot of problems in the continent because people are not informed. Knowledge is power. In Cameroon for instance, there are internal difficulties because people do not get to read and understand the laws. People have to be sensitised on many issues for them to understand the stakes involved; at the levels of the governor and the governed. We have to conduct research at the local level to better appreciate the problems. We cannot solve our African difficulties at the macro level, when we are not done with the micro problems.

Some observers hold that we have talked about all the good ideas in Africa and nothing much has changed. How different will the AGGN be?

It is not a matter of just talking; it is an issue of getting people together. We have to start. I have colleagues already working in other countries across the African continent; they are assisting in elections organisation, the case of Zambia quickly comes to mind. We are making efforts to implant the network in regions across the continent so that we focus on development in that region. We also have to learn from good examples like the positive impact of the Ghanaian and Senegalese Diaspora contributing to the development of their countries. This is a combination of good governance and the Diaspora coming back to make their own contribution. AGGN fellows in Ghana and Senegal can organise workshops in any other parts of the continent and explain the motive of their success and how it can be transferred and vice versa. We do not want to sit in Europe and talk. We want to have partners in the African continent and work on the ground, with our existing institutions. We want to do research in Africa and tell Africans what is happening in their backyard. When people are informed, they will be moved for change. People cannot sit and see things just changing. People cannot act when they are not motivated to do so. People cannot protest when they do not understand what they are protesting for. What will they achieve after that? That worry must be answered for it to succeed.

How ready is the Cameroonian Diaspora to contribute to the development of the country?

The major problem of the African and Cameroonian Diaspora in Europe is what I call the living in a comfort zone to a discomfort situation in Africa. The comfort is that in Europe, the laws are there and they function in an order. Unlike in the African continent where most of our laws are not respected. There is a lot of inertia and corruption rocking our systems. There is the will and motivation for the African Diaspora to come back. Some have been back. Some have comeback, failed and gone back to Europe. The problems are not only at the level of the government, we the citizens must show a good example to a fellow citizen and not be an instrument of

bribery and corruption. The government must enforce the laws at the top, but the citizens should be aware that they are stakeholders in all the processes, in the rise and fall of their countries.

How far does AGGN intend to go?

That is a difficult question to answer. We do not have a limit. We want to go as much as we can in playing our role as stakeholders in the development of the African continent, thanks to the knowledge acquired in Europe and the support of some German institutions and the government out there.

Anything to add?

we have complained a lot in the African continent. As a guest speaker in one development conference on Cameroon in Germany, I spoke about the success stories of some Cameroonian Diaspora who have come back home and invested and they are doing great. Somebody took the floor and said we should not talk as if everything is positive in Cameroon. I responded that we already know about the negative things happening, so we have to apply behavioural knowledge to change. We have different models to change. Cameroonians need what we call appreciative inquiry, based on the premise that a system has the negative and positive sides. All systems have that. If you focus on the negative side, you will always see them because they are there. If you focus on the positive, you can always improve the negative. Let us proceed from what is positive and continue from there. People should never ignore any form of good knowledge and capacity building opportunities.

Interviewed By Walter Wilson Nana



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