

ING. SOPHIA TIJANI

IS FIRST FEMALE VICE PRESIDENT OF GHANA INSTITUTION OF ENGINEERING

Michael Danso, CA&ER, Accra

The role of women in the engineering profession comes with a huge mountain of myths irrespective of its diversity with amazing opportunities available to women.

Myths, such as women are not strong enough to be engineers, women are not good at Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, women are too timid to be engineers, women cannot progress to the top jobs in engineering, a woman cannot be an engineer and raise a family, are some of the misconceptions that militate against women who pursue engineering.

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Development and Talent Management at the Volta River Authority (VRA) Human Resources Department, Ing. (Mrs.) Sophia Abena Tijani.

She is currently the Vice President of the Ghana Institution of Engineering (GhIE) having been elected in a keenly contested election at the Institution's 53rd Annual General Meeting & Conference held in Takoradi recently. Out of a total vote of 1,821, Sophia won the race with 50.36%. A 13-vote margin was enough to beat her contender and set a record of becoming the first female Vice President of GhIE Council.

Ing. Sophia has been rewarded for committing to the demands of reaching higher positions in her field of endeavour and still relishes that moment when the results were announced and declared her winner. According to her, she is yet to settle down from 'cloud nine' after the elections. "I don't know whether I have settled in yet", she stated, when she was asked by this reporter, how it feels like to win an election?



Ing. Sophia Tijani in her element

In her view, going into the election was like going against a huge force since her opponent is a well-known civil engineer who could use his influence as the Chairperson for the Civil Technical Division of GhIE to sway the masses in civil engineering to his advantage. "Thankfully, I had a good team who helped me to strategise and campaign."

"Being elected means people believe in what I can do, and I need to be careful not to disappoint. Winning the election is one thing, and executing is another thing. I am always for impact wherever I find myself and I can't let them down", she assured.

Campaign strategy

When asked what campaign strategy worked for her, she stated that she volunteered to serve as Vice President for the next council year due to her passion to use engineering to improve lives and support the council to: Promote professional and ethical practice, Advocate for equal opportunities in internships and job placement, Promote STEM education, Improve the GhIE brand and Bring value to the Engineers' stamp to enhance engineering in Ghana.

She is passionate about supporting the GhIE governing council to fully inculcate her ideas into the overall vision of the new council to ensure greater success.

Who is Sophia Tijani?

Sophia is the fourth of five children to her parents, a staunch Christian who loves adventure, not easily manipulated, very forgiving and is purposeful in her actions. Sophia loves God and believes that engineers have a divine calling to use STEM to improve lives. She aspires to be an efficient problem solver, a guiding light, and a dependable bridge to the benefit of family, colleagues, and society.

She is blessed to be married to Ing. Akim Tijani, Plant Manager, Akosombo Generation Station of VRA, with whom she has a child.

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“LET’S COLLABORATE TO SECURE VOLTA GORGE AGAINST ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES”—KENZO

Prince Etsey, NSP, Community Relations, Akosombo

The Deputy Chief Executive (DCE), Engineering and Operations (E&O), of the Volta River Authority (VRA), Mr. Edward Obeng-Kenzo has enjoined members of the Volta Gorge Advisory Committee to collaborate with the Authority to find a lasting solution to the widespread issues of unauthorized activities along the coastline of the Volta Basin.

Issues of illegal activities, disputes, compensation, and environmental management of the Volta Lake continue to be a pressing challenge to the integrity of the basin and the two hydroelectric dams in Akosombo and Akuse.

In line with this, a stakeholder consultative engagement is organized annually between VRA, technocrats, paramount chiefs, and traditional authorities who are custodians of the land to review and map out plan of action for the Volta Gorge Protection.

This year’s meeting was held in Akosombo to discuss the volta gorge cadastral survey and establish boundaries as part of efforts to protect the gorge areas.

Chairman for the Committee, Mr. Obeng-Kenzo, tasked members to ensure protection of the gorge area from illegal activities for the continuous operation of the

Akosombo Dam for the sake of posterity and appealed to the various Paramount Chiefs to collaborate with the Authority to achieve that goal.

The Paramount Chief of the Akwamu traditional area, Odeneho Kwafu Akoto III, commended VRA for enlightening them on the project and urged Nananom to support the efforts to put an end to disputes on Government acquired lands.

He further requested VRA to provide the Chiefs with maps and any other necessary tools to aid in educating their communities on vested lands and Government acquired lands.



Volta Gorge Advisory Committee.

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Educational background

Touching on her educational background, Ing. Sophia said she sat for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at Services '2' Primary School in Takoradi, completed her secondary education at the Holy Child School, Cape Coast in 1996, where she was nicknamed 'the Antagonist' for her unbending nature. She proceeded to the then Takoradi Polytechnic (now Takoradi Technical University) to gain a head start to her career journey of becoming an electrical engineer. She left after a year to pursue her BSc in Electrical Engineering at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) where she was elected the course president, a privilege she enjoyed for only a year due to her 'antagonistic' character.

Her Career

Ing. (Mrs.) Tijani is a licensed professional electrical engineer with twenty years of experience providing solutions in the electricity supply chain. She is currently the Manager in charge of Learning, Development and Talent Management at VRA.

Prior to assuming that position, she was the Manager in charge of Technical Training at the VRA Academy, where she was responsible for the design and implementation of training in the areas of renewable energy, electricity market and regulation, power system operations, protection and control, power system maintenance, and safety.

Sophia served as the P&C Design Engineer at Mott MacDonald Inc. (Houston Office, USA) where she designed substation P&C systems for utilities in North America between 2019 and 2020. She also served as Technical Training Manager at VRA Academy between 2015 and 2017, Senior Planning Engineer at VRA's Hydro Generation Department between 2008 and 2015, Electrical Engineer at VRA's Akosombo Generating Station between 2004 and 2008, and Assistant Electrical Engineer at Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) between 2003 and 2004.

Ing. Sophia has also contributed to the acceleration of electricity trade within the West African regional electricity market. She served as the Transmission Project Development Specialist on the USAID funded West Africa Energy Program, where she developed



Sophia Tijani and her Family

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transaction action plans to guide the Program’s intervention on the six high priority West African Power Pool (WAPP) cross-border transmission line projects, which when completed will see the interconnection of 14 countries within the ECOWAS region.

Ing. Sophia worked to strengthen capacity for planning, operating, and maintaining the electricity infrastructure in the sub-region. She is a WAPP certified regional trainer in renewable energy. She is also a recognized regional trainer in clean energy mini grids.

Between 2016 and 2021, Sophia has served on several Boards and Councils including Hydro Cooperative Credit Union Board, National Council of GhIE, Ho Technical University Board, and Ghana Railway Development Authority Board.

She has a master’s degree in electrical Power Engineering from Texas A&M University, an MBA in Finance from Paris Graduate School of Management, and a BSc in Electrical/Electronics Engineering from KNUST. She is a Fellow of Ghana Institution of Engineering (GhIE), a Senior Member of Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and a Stanford Certified Advanced Project Management Professional.

Message to female Engineers

Having become an icon to female engineers not just in VRA but Ghana as a whole, Sophia wants all female engineers to keep focused, invest in hard work, and always strive for excellence.

Appreciation

Sophia expressed gratitude to the entire engineering community for the confidence reposed in her. She was grateful to her husband, Ing. Akim Tijani, the Chief Executive of VRA, Mr. Emmanuel Antwi-Darkwa and his Management Staff. She is immensely grateful to Ing. Isaac Bedu, Manager, Project Management, who mooted and supported the idea of her candidature, Ms. Alice Erwuah, a Management Trainee, and the entire VRA fraternity for the love, support, and prayers.

The VRA News team wishes to congratulate Ing. (Mrs.) Sophia Tijani for this great feat and wish her a fulfilling and successful tenure.



We need to embrace this idea in order to incorporate Creativity and Innovation in our work processes.

This will serve as the anchor for our sustainability such that when others crawl, VRA will stand, when others stand, VRA will walk, when others walk, VRA will run, when others run, VRA will fly and when others fly, VRA will be their standard.

Michael Baffu Amuah

THEOPHILUS AHIA TETTEH ELECTED NATIONAL SSA CHAIRMAN

Linda Appiah & Kojo Maison, CA &ER



Mr. Theophilus Ahia Tetteh



A section of VRA Senior Staff in a photograph after the congress.

The national body of the Volta River Authority (VRA) Senior Staff Association (SSA) has elected Mr. Theophilus Tetteh Ahia as its new National Chairman to lead and direct the administration of the Association for the next two years.

He will be supported by Mr. Francis Kwami Deku as Vice Chairman, Mr. John Chobbah, General Secretary, Mr. Robert Yeboah, Assistant General Secretary, Mr. Jerry-Nelson Nettey, Treasurer, Edwin Kwamina Adams, Assistant Treasurer and Mrs. Victoria Jemima Mends as the National Women's Commissioner/Organiser.

The new national executives were elected and sworn into office at the Biennial National Delegates Congress of the VRA/NEDCo Senior Staff Association held recently in Takoradi, Western Region.

The New National Chairman, Mr. Theophilus Tetteh Ahia, in his acceptance speech expressed gratitude to the SSA membership especially the national and branch executives, and delegates for the confidence reposed in him in supporting his bid to lead the association.

He appealed to the SSA to rally behind his administration in the discharge of its functions, plans and policies that would promote the welfare, interests, and service conditions of the Association.

Delivering the Keynote Address on behalf of the Chief Executive of VRA, Mr. Emmanuel Antwi-Darkwa, the Deputy Chief Executive, Services, Mr. Kenneth Arthur expressed satisfaction with the choice of theme for the

Congress; "Sustainability of Volta River Authority and NEDCo: The Role of Senior Staff Association".

He explained that the sustainability of any organisation depended on the unflinching commitment of employees who understood its business trends. He urged the SSA to inculcate the business mindset of efficiency, sense of ownership, value addition and cost control in the minds of its members.

"We must look at our various areas and roles we all must play and make sure that we work together to ensure we achieve more. The survival of any organisation has everything to do with a strategy that focuses on robustness, digitalization, multi-stakeholder collaboration and employee development."

The immediate past National Chairman of the SSA, Mr. Cephas Duse, said the role of the Association is crucial as stakeholders in helping to improve productivity of VRA and NEDCo. He said sustaining the operations and business of the two organisations especially in the face of increasing competition and challenges is critical and urged the new executives to work hard to sustain the gains made.

The two days event hosted National and Branch Executives as well as delegates and observers from Accra, Tema, Akuse, Akosombo, Aboadze and NEDCo branch.

VRA COMPLETES REGASKETING ON KGS UNIT 1 TRANSFORMER

Ing. Joshua Adjetey & Ing. Benjamin Kittah



Regasketing of Unit 1 transformer completed successfully

The Volta River Authority has successfully completed the gasketing on the Kpong Generating Station Unit 1 transformer at Akuse.

The task was executed by a joint team of KGS maintenance staff with support from Activités Services - Travaux Divers (ASTD), a contractor based in La Cote D'Ivoire.

The scope of work included the replacement of all the worn-out gaskets on 19T1 radiator pipe mating surfaces, top cover, bushings, CT inspection covers, conservator oil gauge, all other ancillary parts to resolve oil leakages and reconditioning on the transformer oil in the tank. In addition, oil samples were taken for analysis and as-found, electrical tests such as: Insulation resistance test, polarization index test, turns ratio test, power factor of bushings and windings, excitation current test were also conducted with satisfactory results obtained from each test. The as-found and as-left test results signify improved electrical properties of the transformer after

the re-gasketing and oil treatment.

The project, which was completed in a record time of 13 days, eight clear days ahead of schedule, has ensured that VRA keeps its supply plan on track in order to meet our customers' requirements. More importantly, the gasket replacement has inured to cost savings by the Authority as well as improved revenue generation.

It is instructive to state that KGS Units 1, 2, and 3 power transformers have successfully served the station over the last forty years and had to be replaced, as the recommended practice of retightening loose bolts had failed to arrest the incessant oil leakages due to worn out and aged gaskets.

KGS Unit 1, which was shut down on December 20, 2022, was brought back into service on January 3, 2023.

Ayeekoo to the Team.



HYDRO GENERATION DEPARTMENT HOLDS MAIDEN SUPERVISORS RETREAT

Ing. Dennis S. Anyomi and Ing. Benjamin Kittah

Supervisors from the Volta River Authority's Hydro Generating Department (HGD) have held their maiden Supervisors retreat at the Volta Hotel Conference room.

The one-day interactive retreat was aimed at galvanizing the Supervisors in the HGD towards a shared goal, which is to be achieved through brainstorming, collaboration, team building and knowledge sharing. The idea was to facilitate the identification of teething issues and proffer possible solutions.

In his opening remarks, the Director, Hydro Generation, Ing. Kwaku Mensah Sarpong, shared his vision of pushing the Department's performance to the level of the top performers in the hydro division of the Electricity Utility Cost Group (EUCG). He urged the Staff to continue giving off their best to ensure the Department meets its mandate of managing, maintaining, and safely operating the Authority's Akosombo and Kpong Hydroelectric plants, the solar generating facilities at Navrongo, Kaleo and Lawra as well as the Government of Ghana's (GoG) mini-grid installations.

Planning Engineer of the HGD, Ing. Dennis S. Anyomi made a presentation on the key drivers of the Department's excellent performance in 2022. He highlighted the shortfalls that need to be addressed through proposed mitigative measures. He also outlined the 2023 departmental targets

in line with the Authority's "SPICE" objectives.

At the event, a breakaway session, comprising six focus groups, brainstormed on the Department's Six key performance areas. The objective was to review the existing status quo, benchmarking them with international best practice and suggesting areas of improvements for adoption. The key areas considered include; Operation & Maintenance; Creating a Harmonious Work Environment; Human Resource Development; Creativity & Innovation; Cost Consciousness and Health, Safety, Security & Environment (HSSE).

Recommendations by the various focus groups were thoroughly discussed, fine-tuned, and drawn into initiatives for the Department. The initiatives are expected to be developed into performance targets for the Supervisors to ensure smooth implementation.

Present at the event were the Plant Managers, Sectional Managers, Engineers, Group Leaders and the Administrative team.



VRA COLLABORATES WITH GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO BOOST RENEWABLE PROJECT DRIVE

Michael Danso, CA&ER, Accra

The Volta River Authority (VRA) has been in close collaboration with MBA students of the Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, Washington, USA on their Global Business Experience (GBE) program.

The GBE program is an academia-industrial exercise which provides MBA students with valuable international business experience by conducting consulting projects with companies outside the United States.

Students from the University visited VRA recently to explore business partnerships and discuss issues of common interests that would advance VRA's Renewable Energy agenda and develop short to medium term financing strategies for these projects.

The team was met on arrival by Director, Corporate Strategy Department, Mr. Clement Boakye, Manager, Corporate Strategy & Planning, Mr. Barima Kofi Peprah, and other team members, who briefed the visitors on progress made so far by the Authority in its pursuit to fully harness renewable energy in its generation mix.

In a presentation, the Georgetown University team comprising, Campbell Wallace, Tatiana Shangina and Nicholas Sandstrom proposed that VRA should develop a plan to market renewable power solutions to mining and other energy-intensive companies in Ghana who have made carbon reduction commitments.

They also proposed the need for the Authority to develop innovative project finance structures and identify potential investors that align with VRA's renewable plans given Ghana's current macroeconomic predicament.

The students were highly confident that implementing these recommendations would accelerate progress towards VRA's renewable energy goals and result in significant financial profits for the Authority.

LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT EMBARKS ON MAIDEN RETREAT

Michael Danso, CA&ER, Accra



Staff of LSD in a group photograph with DCE, Services.

The Legal Services Department (LSD) has embarked on a two-day off-site retreat for an all-inclusive thorough introspection of the legal services provision and administration in the Volta River Authority (VRA).

The retreat which was the first of its kind in the history of the Department, espoused new ways of working to improve on the mandate of the Department. It was under the theme - “Creating a Trusted Legal Hub for Business Decision Making” and was attended by the entire Staff body of the Department.

The Ag. Director, Legal Services, Mr. Francis K. Yalley, briefing participants said the purpose of the retreat was to improve on the service delivery of the Department especially in decision making of the VRA business processes.

He said it was a prime opportunity to learn from one another’s expertise, strategise and improve work delivery, improve customers satisfaction, socialise, build relationships, network, and strengthen work culture.

Opening the retreat, the Deputy Chief Executive (Services), Ing. Kenneth Arthur commended the Department for the off-site retreat which he said was a good opportunity to explore new ways that would improve their work culture and the decision making and business of the Authority.

He shared a thought on what he called, ‘The 3D Module’, which stands for De-carbonization, Decentralization, and Digitalization and urged the Department to be abreast with it and play its part in achieving the 3Ds of work.



Mr. Francis K. Yalley

LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT EMBARKS ON MAIDEN RETREAT

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He assured them that efforts would be made by Management to address the challenges of inadequate office space for Staff and insufficient lawyers that militate against the effective work of the Department.

Speaking about 'Teamwork', Advisor, Office of the VRA Chief Executive, Dr. (Mrs.) I. Stella Agyenim-Boateng, said each person plays a unique role in a group dynamic and it is incumbent on everyone to be part of positive change.

She urged the participants to reflect on their contribution to the group dynamics within the LSD team and work as a team to deliver high quality results.

In a presentation on the theme, "Creating a Trusted Legal Hub for Decision Making", Ag. Manager, Power Business Section, Lawyer Kwame Amankwah-Twum encouraged members of the Department to reflect on the entire mandate of the LSD and adopt a problem-solving approach, promote challenging, rewarding, and respectful work environment and constant communication of the business.

Manager, Corporate Strategy and Planning, Barima Kofi Peprah asked LSD to provide leadership in stakeholder engagement, commercial and policy matters, and make contributions beyond legal advice in Special Projects.



The retreat enabled LSD Staff to strengthen work culture.

VRA ENGAGES STAKEHOLDERS ON LOWER VOLTA DREDGING AND AQUATIC WEED HARVESTING PROJECT

Linda Appiah, CA&ER, Kpone



Mr. Samuel Fletcher addressing one of the fora.

Riparian communities along the Lower Volta Basin have been engaged and sensitised by the Volta River Authority (VRA), on the urgent need to commence dredging of the Lower Volta River canal to desilt the shoreline and remove aquatic weed vegetation from the waterway.

The Lower Volta Dredging and Weed Harvesting project is expected to remove accumulated debris, dead vegetation, pollutants, and trash that have gathered in the channel of the river and restore it to its original depth and condition to improve aquatic life.

In light of this, series of community engagements have been held in some riparian communities that are directly bordered by the Volta River following the construction of the Akosombo and Kpong Hydroelectric Dams. The communities include Agbeve and Tefle, in the South Tongu District, Mepe in the North Tongu District, and Ada Foah in the Ada East District of the Volta and Greater Accra regions respectively.

At separate fora, Manager, Community Relations, Mr.

Samuel Fletcher outlined the project's social, economic, and environmental benefits to the communities, indicating that on the balance of scale the benefits of the project outweighed the disadvantages at every level.

He added that the project would provide the communities with adequate fresh water for domestic use, improved aesthetics, and tourism, which would be



A community folk airing her concerns

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GNFS CONDUCTS FIRE SAFETY DRILLS AT KPONE THERMAL POWER STATION

Linda Appiah, CA&ER, Kpone



Firefighters and Staff who participated in the exercise.

A combined team of firefighting experts from the Volta River Authority (VRA) and the Ghana National Fire Service, has conducted a fire safety simulation exercise at the Kpone Thermal Power Station (KTPS) to prepare staff for real fire emergency situations.

As an important part of the Authority's fire safety procedure, fire handlers of KTPS periodically conduct fire drills to ensure that staff, customers, or visitors to the station understand what they need to do if there is a fire outbreak.

The exercise was spearheaded by the Chief Fire Officer, Safety and Fire Unit, KTPS, Mr. Rechmial Senanu and led by an officer of GNFS, Bright Agyei who conducted fire drills using pressurized hose in firefighting at the premises of KTPS.

According to Mr. Senanu, the exercise was a unique opportunity to test how effective firefighting and evacuation plan at the station is, which would help to improve any aspects of fire provisions which prove to be ineffective.

He said the exercise involved practical demonstration of the use of fire hose by fire personnel and staff at the Station with a fire hydrant system pressure of six bars.

The practical steps involved the rolling of the water hose to make it ready for connection, connecting the hose to the fire hydrant, connecting the discharge nozzle to the hose, opening the hydrant valve for water to flow, and sweeping of the hose and adjustment of the nozzle to direct the discharged water onto the target or source of Fire.



A demonstration of how to use the water hose to douse fire.

ONCE A HOPELESS VISION, NOW A GREAT FOUNDATION

THE STORY OF A VRA LADIES ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP BENEFICIARY



Jamila Abdulai.

In the nurturing of a young mind, environmental factors play a critical role, especially in their ability to influence the choice of academic or vocational pursuits. I am Jamila Abdulai, and I have a different story.

The education that I have had so far has been the greatest blessing and privilege in my life. I grew up in a village called Labolabo, a remote place in the Asuogyaman district of the Eastern region of Ghana.

The perception of the locals about education is devastating. The cost of formal education has made them ignorant of its benefits and, hence, have no priority in getting educated, especially the females. Growing up in such an area made me view formal education as a luxury for a select few. Most of those who get the chance to receive formal education usually stop after junior high school or senior high school.

Access to formal education is unavailable to many

people, and the few, like me, who are willing to be educated, are also faced with the challenges of not having the needed resources and support to pursue any further education. Besides, tertiary education is not even an option for most of us in rural areas. I say this from experience.

I had my basic education at Nkwékubew Presby Primary and JHS. Throughout the years, most of my colleagues dropped out of school and became mothers and deadbeats. This is not because they were not brilliant enough, but because they lost hope in education and gave up fighting for a better future.

I lived with my mother, who only farmed on a small plot of land at the time to cater for me and my siblings. Our survival was merely based on the harvest she made. With determination for a brighter future, I persevered and studied hard. After our BECE, my hard work paid off and I emerged as the first in my village.

School placements came out and I gained admission to Anum Presbyterian SHS. Unfortunately, my sister was also in school during that time. My mother was already struggling to keep her in school, so I had no hopes of attending SHS because we needed to find ways to help my sister finish first. This made me reluctant to have any life goals.

At that point, I had no ambition for my future. Amid the uncertainties and dire moments, VRA Ladies Association (VRALA), came to my aid just in time. Thanks to the Accra branch of VRALA, I began my high school education at Akwamuman Senior High School in 2015.

I was privileged to receive a scholarship throughout my three years in senior high school thanks to the VRALA's goal of helping needy but brilliant students from rural areas. They never stopped motivating and encouraging me, which helped me study and get the most out of SHS. With my educational background and geographical location growing up, I was not privy to much information about the world outside our little neighborhood in Labolabo.

For instance, I never heard or learned anything about engineering or related fields growing up. All I knew was to study hard to become a medical doctor, a career seen as important and irreplaceable. The concept of engineering was not yet known, let alone appreciated. I had this mindset of only being a medical doctor to thrive in my country.

I was unsure of what to do in 2018 after receiving admission to study biomedical engineering at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. I had no prior knowledge of the course I was offered. I was perplexed because neither my family nor I knew anything about the course.

The ladies, however, were there to support me. They provided me with the direction and mentoring I needed to be prepared to explore a completely new and varied field of study. It has become evident to anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in Ghana that engineering is not a program in which women often get involved.

That, and the novelty of biomedical engineering as a university program in Ghana, means that even fewer women are engaged in that field. As a result, the opportunity for me as a woman to have an education in Ghana, not just in engineering but specifically in biomedical engineering, is a rarity and a privilege.

Now, I desire to be an innovative biomedical engineer who would contribute to the development of health care in Ghana and on the continent. I have completed my undergraduate degree program and currently undertaking my National Service at the Records Division of the VRA Hospital in Accra. Even though it is not a related field, I am happy to be working with savvy supervisors, and I am eager to learn new things and tap into my potential.

Looking back, I realized how fortunate I was to be a VRA Ladies Association Scholarship beneficiary. I cannot even imagine how my life would have turned out without the Scholarship; I am unable to even speculate on how my life might have turned out. I did not have any aspirations for the future, as I already stated. The best option I could have thought of was to learn some vocational training.

However, I am thrilled to say that I am now counted among an engineering graduate group with potential to become the best in Ghana.

I want to foster an environment where everyone, especially women interested in learning technical skills, can easily access this information to help them enter careers that would otherwise have been out of reach for them and to inspire and cultivate interest in education among young people.

My desire to become a biomedical engineer goes beyond just the chance to become an engineer; it also involves influencing the most fundamental and enabling conditions for Ghanaians and Africans as a whole to live successful and fulfilling lives, as well as empowering young people and girls in communities like mine.

I am grateful to the VRA Ladies Association for their love, guidance, and support throughout this journey, as they were there for me to guide and prepare me for a better world. Every drop in the ocean counts, and I will always be grateful to those who helped me get through my challenges.



A proud moment captured.

MESSAGE BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, STAFF HOUSING LOAN SCHEME IN HONOUR OF MR. AMISHADDAI KUMI-ABOAGYE, SENIOR STAFF REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE STAFF HOUSING LOAN SCHEME

Mr. Amishaddai, you served on the Board of Trustees meritoriously over a period of eight years, and your contributions at meetings were just awesome. Your deep knowledge on issues impacted positively on the Operations of the Board of Trustees of the Staff Housing Loan Scheme.

Your exemplary countenance, demeanor, and calm attitude in times of pressure was admired by all. You touched many lives through the discharge of your work.

Mr. Kumi-Aboagye, you have earned our sincere and deepest respect and we are proud of your sterling qualities.

We are proud of you.

Ayeekoo!





KUDOS TO VHSL FOR GIVING ME THE BEST SURGERY ON MY BIRTHDAY

Irene Fafa Avissey (Patient) - Snr. Finance Officer

To undergo medical surgery on your birthday may not just sound bizarre and unthinkable, but intriguing because birthdays usually give you the opportunity to express your appreciation to God for granting and permitting you with life to see another year, and not to gamble with your life.

It is an occasion to rethink your life, reflect on your past, evaluate your present, and make plans for your future. It is a time when your past interconnects with your present to shape your future.

I, however, took a bold and daring decision on Monday, February 27, 2023, which was my birthday, to have surgery at the VRA Hospital, Accra, to correct a medical condition that I have been battling with for some time now.

Nobody gets used to the idea of having surgery due to the life-threatening myth associated with it. However, surgical professionals at the VRA Hospital, Accra, led by Dr. Kwabena Omari-Yeboah, Director, VRA Health Services Ltd, made it look so ordinary for me. They virtually set the standards of ethical and humane practice with my appointment which made my surgery look like a special birthday gift to myself.

The love and professionalism exhibited by Dr. Omari-Yeboah and his team during my recent encounter was both overwhelming and unprecedented. This was certainly not my first in-patient experience, but it was my first time at this particular hospital and the experience was unique, refreshing and profound.

How it all started

The countdown, the day before and on the day of the surgery, I was extremely anxious and tensed. Though it wasn't my first time going under the knife, I had been assured by the medical team of a smooth and successful surgery and in good hands.

My experience

It all came to pass on that fateful morning; the team played their respective roles in an impeccable way. I was presented with an opportunity to choose my favourite music from a variety of options to be played for me by the Director Health Services. After that came a genuine show of love, well wishes and encouragement all in an attempt to reassure me that I will be treated well before, during and after the surgery.

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KUDOS TO VHSL FOR GIVING ME THE BEST SURGERY ON MY BIRTHDAY

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As if that was not enough, a beautiful birthday cake with the inscription: HAPPY BIRTHDAY FAFA was presented to me with the singing of a birthday song by the team which I refer to as Team 'V' to climax my joy and to reduce my worries and anxiety that morning.

I can confirm to everyone reading this article that, this isn't my first surgery, but my first with the VRA Hospital, Accra. If it was possible, from what I experienced, I would love to do it over and over again especially with Dr. Omari-Yeboah and the "V" theatre nurses. It was captivating with a high level of professionalism displayed by them.

The popular adage says: "No Pain, No Gain", which literally means, suffering is necessary in order to achieve something. In my case, I will say 'No Pain but 100% plus Gain', because the experience was sweet, and I can only describe it as one that has added greater value to my personal outlook and orientation.

Colleagues, especially those in Accra, Tema and its environs, we have it all here now in our hospital facility, I highly urge, encourage, and recommend the VRA Hospital to you, your spouses and the VRA Ladies Association (Engery! Energy!!, Energy!!!), for all your Obstetrics & Gynecological needs. Take advantage of the opportunity NOW!

With my three encounters of surgery at different hospitals, none comes highly recommended except the VRA Hospital here in Accra under the leadership of Dr. Omari-Yeboah, Dr. Emmanuel Sowah and their team of medical professionals. We have a great asset, let's make use of it.

Thank you.

VRA ENGAGES STAKEHOLDERS ON LOWER VOLTA DREDGING AND AQUATIC WEED HARVESTING PROJECT

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translated into revenue and improved livelihood for the communities.

He was hopeful that water transportation would be enhanced and become cost-effective as the ecosystem of the river is restored to its normalcy.

Principal Research Officer, of the Environment and Sustainable Development Department (E&SDD), Ms. Elizabeth Kisson, in a presentation, also elaborated on the public health benefits of the project to the communities. She said the project would eradicate diseases like Schistosomiasis and Malaria. She added that the project would increase livelihood activities such as fishing and trading, and improve drinking water for the communities.

The Project Consultant, Mr. Emmanuel Amekor, explained that the project would be executed in phases. He said project locations would be divided into five Lots

starting from "Akuse to Avakpo as (Lot 1), Avakpo to Aklakpanu (Lot 2), Aklakpanu to Sogakope Bridge (Lot 3), Sogakope Bridge to Agotaga (Lot4) and Agotaga to Estuary at Ada (Lot.5), whereas the Aquatic Weed Harvesting would be categorised into three (Lots); from Kpong Headpond through to Sogakope Bridge to the Estuary.

The District Chief Executives for Ada East Hon. Sarah Dugbakie Pobee and North Tongu Hon. Devine Osborn Kwadzo jointly pledged their commitment toward ensuring the successful implementation of the project and urged their residents to support the project as it is geared towards their well-being.

Torgbiga Nakakpo Dugbazah VIII, the Paramount Chief of Tefle, Traditional Area, and some Chiefs and Opinion Leaders lauded the initiative and hoped it would yield the intended purpose.

HIGH STANDARD OF CARE GIVEN

By Anna Bama Awuni (MIS Department)



Director Health Services and his team are incomparable when it comes to health delivery in Ghana.

In a time where the country is facing a lot of allegations concerning poor health delivery that has resulted in many mishaps where lives have been altered and some lost due to the carelessness of health workers of which I have had my fair share, VRA Health Services has shown that there is hope in attaining excellent health delivery in Ghana.

My experience

On my first consultation, I walked into Director of Health Services, Dr. Kwabena Omari Yeboah's office feeling terrified due to my past experiences with other doctors. He made me feel important by paying attention to what I had to say and after examining me, he explained

to me in detail what my issue was and the treatment procedure to be administered. He wore a reassuring smile that made me trust his judgement.

On admission, he with his team ensured I had the best health care. The pain management they provided made a huge difference. The hospital Matron and Nurses in their warm caring nature with good sense of humour were always there to cater for my need with no complains and constantly assured me that my health was their priority.

The team has people with genuine kindness and are the most understanding, caring, compassionate and loving I have come across in the health sector. They have impeccable interpersonal skills and prioritize patients comfort and convenience at each stage of their health delivery and recovery journey.

The treatment I was given during my admission had some of my family members on video calls questioning if I was truly in a hospital in Ghana. The constant monitoring was remarkable.

To an excellent team

Director, Health Services and Team,

Your service in health delivery is next to none.

Thank you for treating me with dignity, compassion, and respect.

VHSL to the world.

For BEST HEALTH DELIVERY, VRA HEALTH SERVICES IS YOUR BEST BET.

BLACK STAR AWARDS

AKWAABA FESTIVAL 2023



MR. EDWIN ARYTEY

As the General Manager of Volta Hotel, Akosombo, your proficiency in turning the Volta Hotel into one of the most visited hotels for holiday makers and tourists is exceptional. Besides Volta Hotel becoming the hub for governmental agencies retreats, a cruise in the Dodi Princess on the Akosombo lake has become the most enjoyable experience in Ghana.

In recognition of your invaluable services and immeasurable contributions to the Arts, Culture and Tourism industry of Ghana, organizers of Akwaaba Festivals Ghana hereby present to you:

The Black Star Honorary Award

2023

Ayekoo!



2023
Honoree

WELL WISHES POUR FOR LAWYER ANSAH AS HE RETIRES IN GRAND STYLE

Michael Danso. CA&ER, Accra



Lawyer Ansah (middle) in a pose with his colleagues.

A send-off party organised by the Legal Services Department (LSD) in honour of Lawyer Kwaku Ansah, the immediate past Manager, Office of the Director, LSD saw the outpour of human sentiments and emotion-filled messages for him.

The gathering brought together Staff of the various sections under the LSD who displayed affection and shared fond memories of their exiting colleague in goodwill messages.

Some of the messages were so touching to the extent of influencing the emotions of others including the celebrant, which made him tear up and was spotted wiping the corners of his eyes furtively. It was intriguing to see Lawyer Ansah taken by surprise when his attention was drawn to the presence of his immediate family at the send-off party.

Very uncharacteristic of the seasoned legal practitioner, Lawyer Ansah who is known to be a

very outspoken person, was somewhat short of words when he was called upon to address his colleagues.

However, he managed to thank them for the co-operation, respect, and good relationship he enjoyed with them and apologized for instances he unknowingly did anything untoward and stepped on some toes in his line of work.

He quoted one of his favourite literature lines by William Shakespeare, which states that, “If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; If not, why then this parting was well made”, as his parting message.

Lawyer Kwaku Ansah was engaged on October 3, 2005, by the Volta River Authority as a Senior Counsel. In April 2009, he became the Unit Head of the then Litigation Unit, a position he managed with diligence which got him promoted to become Principal Counsel by October 1 of the same year.

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Isaac Ewuah

Finance and Investment Analyst

Pensions & Investments



THE IMPORTANCE OF LIQUIDITY IN RETIREMENT

Retirement is a time when most people look forward to relaxing and enjoying the fruits of their labor. However, it is also a time when financial planning becomes more critical than ever. One of the most important aspects of retirement planning is ensuring that you have enough liquidity to meet your needs. In this article, we will discuss the importance of liquidity in retirement and how you can ensure that you have enough of it.

What is Liquidity?

Liquidity refers to the ability to convert an asset into cash quickly without losing its value. In other words, it is the ease with which you can access your money when you need it. For example, cash in a savings account is highly liquid because you can withdraw it at any time without penalty. On the other hand, real estate is less liquid because it may take months or even years to sell and convert into cash.

Why is Liquidity Important in Retirement?

Liquidity is essential in retirement because it provides you with the flexibility to meet unexpected expenses or take advantage of opportunities that may arise. For example, if you need to pay for a medical emergency or repair your home, having liquid assets can help you avoid taking on debt or selling investments at a loss. Additionally, having liquid assets can provide peace of mind and reduce financial stress during retirement.

How Much Liquidity Do You Need?

The amount of liquidity you need in retirement depends on your individual circumstances and goals. A general rule of thumb is to have three to six months' worth of living expenses in liquid assets. However, if you have significant expenses or anticipate large purchases, you may need more liquidity. It is essential to work with a financial advisor to determine the appropriate amount of liquidity for your situation.

Where Can You Find Liquidity?

There are several sources of liquidity in retirement, including savings accounts, money market accounts, and short-term bonds. These types of investments are generally low risk and provide easy access to cash. However, they may also offer lower returns than other investments such as stocks or real estate.

The Risks of Illiquidity in Retirement

The risks of illiquidity in retirement are significant. If you do not have enough liquid assets to cover unexpected expenses, you may be forced to sell investments at a loss or take on debt. Additionally, illiquid assets such as real estate or private equity may be difficult to sell quickly, leaving you without access to cash when you need it most.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF LIQUIDITY IN RETIREMENT...

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How to Ensure You Have Enough Liquidity

To ensure that you have enough liquidity in retirement, it is essential to plan ahead and diversify your investments. This means having a mix of liquid and illiquid assets that can provide both income and growth potential. Additionally, it is important to regularly review your financial plan and adjust your investments as needed.

The Benefits of Liquidity in Retirement

Having enough liquidity in retirement provides several benefits, including peace of mind, flexibility, and the ability to take advantage of opportunities. It also reduces the risk of financial stress and allows you to enjoy your retirement without worrying about money.

Research suggests that an income of 70% to 80% of a worker's pre-retirement income can maintain a retiree's standard of living after retirement.

For example, if a person made roughly GHS1000 a month on average during his working life, this person can have a similar standard of living with GHS700 - GHS800 a month of income after retirement.

The Drawbacks of Too Much Liquidity

While having enough liquidity is essential, having too much liquidity can also be a drawback. If you keep too much money in low-risk, low-return investments, you may miss out on potential growth opportunities. Additionally, inflation can erode the value of your savings over time if they are not invested in assets that keep pace with inflation.

The Bottom Line

In conclusion, liquidity is a critical component of retirement planning. Having enough liquid assets provides flexibility, peace of mind, and the ability to meet unexpected expenses or take advantage of opportunities. However, it is important to strike a balance between liquidity and growth potential to ensure that your savings keep pace with inflation and provide income throughout your retirement years. Work with a financial advisor to determine the appropriate amount of liquidity for your situation and develop a plan that meets your goals and needs.

WELL WISHES POUR FOR LAWYER ANSAH AS HE RETIRES IN GRAND STYLE...

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He was appointed Supervising Counsel on June 1, 2012, and later appointed Manager, Litigation on September 2, 2019

Following the approval of a new Organizational Chart for the LSD, the then Litigation Unit became the Litigation Section in May 2014 which was headed by Lawyer Ansaah.

He was re-assigned by the Office of the Deputy Chief Executive, Services, as Manager, Office of the Director, Legal Services Department on November 7, 2022, a position he held until his retirement on March 10, 2023.

Some landmark cases Lawyer Ansaah won judgement in favour of VRA included VRA vrs. Richard Osei and VRA vrs. Great Consolidated Diamonds Ltd, both at the High Court in Accra. He quoted one of his favourite literature lines by William Shakespeare, which states that, "If we do meet again, why, we shall smile; If not, why then this parting was well made", as his parting message.



Mrs. Marian Atta-Benyah

Health Services, Aboadze

PRIVATE SECTOR MINDSET: PERFORMANCE DRIVEN, MOTIVATED AND ENGAGED

The Private Sector Mindset discussion is still on as we delve into the fourth leg of the characteristics of private sector mindset. There is the need to be performance driven, motivated and engaged to help sustain VRA. We must take full responsibility of tasks, focusing on results and not just inputs.

The sustainability of VRA depends on all Staff, which calls for a regular reminder of what we have set for ourselves as we inculcate private sector mindset in our public service delivery.

The earlier articles discussed the first, second and third characteristics as well as the expected behaviours of Private Sector Mindset- “Speed and Quality in Service Delivery”, “I deliver my work on time and strive to eliminate errors.” “Cost Effectiveness and Value Addition” - “I do my work in a Cost-Effective Manner, making the best use of available resources to achieve results”, “Innovation and Change Champion” - “I look for new ways to improve my work and adjust to business change”.

This article features the fourth characteristic of the private sector mindset- “Performance Driven, motivated and engaged” with the expected behaviour - “I take full responsibility of tasks, focusing on results and not just on inputs”.

Performance Driven

Performance Driven describes an organisation or business strategy that stresses the importance of the performance of its individual employees and of its operating policies and systems (English Dictionary).

At the core of each successful organisation, you will find a work culture that strives for better performance every day. Organisations that excel in their domain are as a result of their leaders’ painstaking efforts to inculcate a performance driven culture. Performance goals and targets are clearly defined and communicated to them formally. Employees feel motivated and accountable for their performance and strive to achieve or exceed the targets set for them.

High-performing organisations have a well-developed performance management process that features several components that function interdependently. Performance Management is not only an HR responsibility but all Departments, Managers and Supervisors are to take ownership of the Performance Management System. Employees are to take self-initiatives to improve their individual and team performance in order to raise the performance bars on a regular basis until they have reached or exceeded the industry bench-mark (Gartner lexicon).

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PRIVATE SECTOR MINDSET: PERFORMANCE DRIVEN, MOTIVATED AND ENGAGED

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The Volta River Authority (VRA) Performance Management System—Balanced Score Card (BSC), used for staff appraisal allows Supervisors and subordinates to discuss and set targets according to their job descriptions/functions. Performance Reviews are conducted quarterly to assess the performance of staff. The Human Resources Department in collaboration with MIS and Corporate Strategy Departments have designed an automated BSC called the Insyte Performance Management Application, which was rolled out during the Third Quarter in 2022. This application gave Staff the opportunity to review their 2022 third and fourth quarter performance. The 2023 Target Setting process began with Staff being trained on how to set targets using the Insyte Application. It is interesting to note that all Departmental Objectives were loaded onto the Insyte Application to guide Staff set targets in line with the Departmental and Corporate Objectives to ensure the realisation of the overall objectives of VRA.

Motivated and Engaged

Employee engagement refers to how committed employees are to the business and its success. It includes how motivated Staff are to complete their work, how closely they relate to the company's values, and their willingness to collaborate and work as a team (Kate Dagher, Management and Corporate Consultant & Writer).

Employee engagement is important for many different reasons. If your team members are not happy in their roles, it is certainly going to be reflected in their work because they will feel demotivated. When employees do not feel motivated, they do not perform well, which will lead to low productivity. Making employees feel like they are part of the team is important for job satisfaction and overall employee satisfaction as well. When employees are engaged, the workplace becomes a more positive environment because individuals are actually happy to be there and to be a part of the team. (Kate Dagher, Management and Corporate Consultant & Writer).

Motivation and engagement creates an environment where people are willing to work with zeal, interest and a high personal/group satisfaction. This gives employees a sense of responsibility, loyalty, and confidence to achieve organisational goals.

Ways to improve motivation and engagement

Some perspectives on how to improve motivation and engagement by Experts are outlined below;

- » Encourage employee personal development
- » Recognize and reward your team for their hard work
- » Create psychological safety
- » Encourage teamwork and collaboration among employees
- » Provide employees with tools and resources to perform their job
- » Encourage creativity
- » Schedule regular one-on-one meetings
- » Minimise organisational politics and promote fairness.

Conclusion

Performance of Staff is critical to the sustainability of VRA. We (Staff) are expected to take full responsibility of tasks, focusing on results and not just on inputs. As we all work hard towards the realisation of a sustained VRA, we have to continue to pursue the Private Sector Mindset of doing things. It will take you and I to sustain VRA. Let us do it together!



Ruth Owusu

RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) CORNER

THE ROLE OF THE VOLTA RIVER AUTHORITY UNDER THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION LAW

Hello Readers, in the last edition of the VRA NEWS, the RTI Office focused and concluded discussions on the Procedure for Access to Information, the Timelines for Processing Applications, the Exceptions to the Fourteen-Day Rule and Decision on Application for Access to Information.

In this quarter's edition, we shall be focusing on the responsibilities imposed by the RTI Act on the Authority.

Firstly, the Authority is enjoined by the RTI Law to practice proactive disclosure of information. Proactive disclosure implies an obligation of the Authority, on its own initiative, to publish non-exempt information through reports, website etc. This is to ensure that information seekers get immediate access to public information and avoid the time and expense of filing a request or engaging in administrative procedures (Section 2).

The Authority shall also generate, process, maintain, and preserve information which is accurate and authentic (Section 3(a)).

Additionally, the Authority has been mandated to establish an Information Unit, headed by an Information Officer who shall be in charge of processing all RTI applications received by the Authority within the timelines specified by the RTI Act (Section 3(b)).

The Authority shall compile an up-to-date Information Manual which contains the following:

- » a list of its departments,
- » a description of its Organisational Structure,
- » the details of the activities of each department,
- » the various classes and types of information held by the departments, and
- » the address and contact details of the Authority's Information Officer and Unit (Section 3)

Departments within the Authority are, therefore, required to ensure the timely submission of details of their activities as well as the lists of the types and classes of information in their custody.

Furthermore, VRA is required to produce and submit Annual Reports to the RTI Commission, in order to keep stakeholders informed about the implementation of the RTI Law in the Authority (Section 77).

Also, in the course of an application or investigation, the Authority has a duty to assist the RTI Commission (Section 70).

Finally, VRA is authorised to retain charges it receives under the RTI Act, which shall be used to defray expenses it incurs in the performance of functions under the Act. The charges shall be paid into a bank account opened for this purpose with the approval of the Controller and Accountant-General (Section 76).

For further information and enquiries on the implementation of the RTI Law in the Authority, you may contact the RTI Officer via telephone: 0575423334/0575423335 and email: vra.rti@vra.com.

TAKORADI THERMAL POWER STATION HOLDS FIRST DEPARTMENTAL DURBAR FOR 2023

By Kwabena T. Kankam-Yeboah



A staff making a contribution.

Staff of the Takoradi Thermal Power Station, Aboadze on Friday, March 31, 2023, held their first Departmental durbar at the Takoradi Thermal Power Station (TTPS) Meeting Room.

Addressing Staff, the Director, Thermal Generation, Mr. Jacob Yawson, urged his team to change their mindset from “an availability-only” focus to a mindset of profitability. This, according to him, is to ensure the Authority’s thermal generation portfolio remained resilient, competitive and sustainable in the highly competitive energy market.

Speaking further and citing the example of a cleaner at NASA, who believed his work was helping put a man on the moon, Mr. Yawson reiterated that, “ideas do not reside in the mind of only one person”. Thus, everyone’s input added to the production of energy, whether a Receptionist or a Plant Manager. Following that, he urged the Staff to develop the attitude of sharing ideas among themselves. This, he said, would promote and integrate the culture of creativity and innovation within the organisation.

He pointed out that, considering the competitive nature of the energy market, it has become imperative for the Authority’s employees to embrace and deploy creativity and innovation in the conduct of their business. This is a measure aimed at reducing cost and improving operational efficiency, which largely would inure to improving our operational and service delivery. This culture, according to him, is the sure way to strengthening the Authority’s sustainability efforts.

Aside the above, the Director used the opportunity to caution Staff on responsible social media ethics and reminded them that only the Chief Executive or his delegated representative (appointed at the time) is responsible for releasing information on VRA to the general public. He stated that any Staff found culpable would be dealt with.

Touching on the recent explosion on HRSG1 during his main presentation, the Director charged all to ensure that the events of the explosion did not happen again. He noted that although the explosion did not result in fatal human casualties, the events of March 23, 2023 had dealt a huge blow to VRA in terms of revenue and capital expenditure. Other indicators considered in the presentation include the 2022 TG SBU performance, improving operational excellence at TTPS and the expectations for 2023.

The meeting closed with an open forum, where Staff shared concerns, to which Director and other Managers provided responses.

In attendance were the Management and Staff of the Takoradi Thermal Power Station. Conspicuously missing, however, were the Maintenance Staff on duty working assiduously to restore the Steam Turbine to service, in order to operate on combined cycle mode.



Director, Thermal Generation and other Management of the Plant were in attendance.

LET'S 'SPICE' UP OUR 'BRAISE' STRATEGY



Creativity
& INNOVATION
The Anchor for Our Sustainability

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- VRA marks 62nd Anniversary with Creativity and Innovation
- VRA EPP 2023 Operation “Da wo ho so” Exercise kicks off.

Please send your concerns, questions, congratulatory messages, issues, suggestions, etc., to corpcomm@vra.com

For further information/enquiries, contact
Corporate Affairs & External Relations Unit, Corporate Office

Tel: +233 302 664941-9 Ext. 252, 236 & 453

PLC 724252/413/309/453.

www.vra.com