



SECOND EDITION IMPACT NEWSLETTER MAY–AUGUST 2026

Building Resilient Communities

A Quarter of Action, Learning and Impact

Between May and August 2026, Alliance for Empowering Rural Communities strengthened its work at the intersection of community empowerment, environmental sustainability and youth climate leadership.

From facilitating community dialogue and introducing schoolchildren to practical environmental action to building expertise in climate negotiations, activism and zero-waste solutions, this period reflected our commitment to ensuring that communities and young people are not merely included in environmental action but are equipped to lead it.

The quarter culminated in the inaugural **Youth Climate Joy & Healing Festival**, a pioneering gathering that placed well-being, connection and healing at the heart of youth climate engagement.

Together, these activities tell an inspiring story of local action, growing leadership and a movement being built from the community level upward.

AERC QUARTER 2 AT A GLANCE

AERC • MAY–AUGUST 2026

THRIVING
RURAL
COMMUNITIES
BRIGHTER
TOMORROWS

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

PEOPLE
NATURE
STRONGER
TOGETHER

50

Young climate advocates engaged through the inaugural Youth Climate Joy & Healing Festival



1

Community dialogue held to advance locally led environmental action



STUDENTS

Engaged in environmental education and practical tree planting



3

Major climate and environmental capacity-building programmes represented



PRIORITIES

Waste management • Flooding • Sanitation • Climate resilience



AERC VOICE

Amplified through articles, media engagements and public advocacy



Empowering communities for a sustainable and resilient future



STRENGTHENING LOCAL ACTION ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Community Environmental Dialogue in Gbetsile

To commemorate World Environment Day on 5 June 2026, AERC organised a community environmental dialogue in Gbetsile in the Kpone-Katamanso Municipality. The dialogue created an important platform for residents and local stakeholders to discuss the environmental challenges affecting their community and identify practical actions that could be driven locally.

Participants raised concerns about indiscriminate waste disposal, inadequate drainage, flooding, open burning, poor sanitation and the loss of trees and green spaces. Beyond identifying these challenges, the conversation encouraged community members to reflect on their own role in creating and sustaining solutions.

Proposed actions included promoting household and community composting, strengthening local environmental education, improving collaboration with municipal authorities and reviving community-level structures capable of supporting sanitation and environmental action.

One message emerged clearly: environmental protection cannot be achieved through policies and institutions alone. Communities must be empowered to identify their priorities, shape appropriate responses and take ownership of the solutions.

AERC will continue to build on the concerns and recommendations raised through the dialogue by promoting community participation and engaging relevant local authorities.

“Sustainable environmental action becomes possible when communities are recognised not simply as beneficiaries, but as leaders and partners in change.”

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY PHOTO GALLERY





BUILDING STRONGER CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

AERC Participates in the Climate Activist Programme 2026

AERC was represented at the Climate Activist Programme 2026 boot camp held in Tamale in June.

The programme brought together emerging climate leaders to deepen their understanding of climate justice, community organising, systems thinking and evidence-based advocacy. Through practical learning and collaborative exercises, participants examined how environmental challenges interact with gender, livelihoods, health and social inequality. Key areas explored included Climate Science, Community activism, Content Creation, Creative Arts and Food, Green Entrepreneurship and the use of systems mapping to understand complex climate challenges.

The programme also provided an opportunity to connect with other climate advocates, exchange community experiences and reflect on how activism can become more inclusive, strategic and responsive to local realities.

The knowledge gained will strengthen AERC's community-based advocacy and help the organisation develop programmes that respond not only to environmental problems but also to the social and economic systems that shape them.



CLIMATE ACTIVIST PROGRAM'26 PHOTO GALLERY





GROWING A GREENER FUTURE

Environmental Education and Tree Planting at DaySpring School

On 1 July 2026, AERC engaged students of DaySpring School in Afienya through an environmental education and tree-planting activity.

The engagement introduced students to the importance of trees and the essential role they play in sustaining healthy communities and ecosystems. Students learned how trees contribute to cleaner air, climate regulation, biodiversity conservation, soil protection and the reduction of extreme heat.

The activity went beyond classroom learning. Students participated directly in planting trees, translating environmental knowledge into practical action and developing a sense of responsibility for nurturing the trees as they grow.

By involving students at an early age, AERC is helping to build a generation that understands that environmental protection is not solely the responsibility of governments and organisations. It is a shared responsibility in which everyone can participate.

For AERC, environmental education is more than awareness creation. It is a long-term investment in the next generation of environmental stewards.

“When we educate young people about the environment, we give them the knowledge and confidence to become part of the solution.”





STRENGTHENING AFRICA'S VOICE IN GLOBAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

Participation in the African Youth Negotiators Fellowship 2026

AERC's leadership capacity received another important boost through participation in the 2026 African Youth Negotiators Fellowship.

Following a competitive selection process, AERC's Executive Director, Desmond Kofi Foe Sena and the administrator, Yvette Ahenkorah both joined the fellowship's intensive training and progressed to the advanced cohort. The programme provided practical insight into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the processes through which international climate decisions are negotiated.

The training covered UNFCCC structures and processes, climate finance, adaptation, Action for Climate Empowerment, just transition pathways and the different decision-making bodies operating under the global climate framework. Participants also developed practical skills in reading negotiation texts, proposing amendments, building consensus and representing regional positions.

Through simulations and negotiation exercises, the fellowship demonstrated how individual words, including "shall" and "should" can significantly influence the strength, implementation and accountability of global climate commitments.

This experience strengthens AERC's ability to connect community realities in Ghana with national, regional and global climate-policy discussions. It also positions the organisation to advocate more effectively for adaptation finance, climate education, meaningful youth participation and a just transition that responds to the needs of vulnerable communities.

AFRICAN YOUTH NEGOTIATORS FELLOWSHIP ,26

PHOTO GALLERY





PARTICIPATION IN THE ZERO WASTE ACADEMY 2026

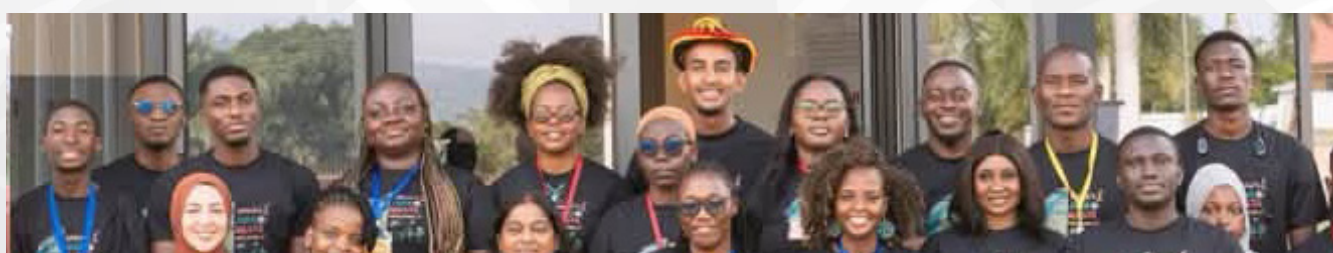
Yvette Ahenkorah (Urban and Infrastructure Lead) represented AERC in the Zero Waste Academy 2026 organized by GAIA Africa, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to waste reduction, circular-economy solutions and environmental justice.

The Academy created an opportunity to strengthen knowledge of zero-waste principles and explore approaches that treat discarded materials as resources rather than problems. It also highlighted the importance of community participation, waste-worker inclusion, public education and supportive local policies in building sustainable waste-management systems.

The experience is particularly relevant to AERC's growing work on organic-waste recovery, composting, soil health and green livelihood creation.

These lessons will contribute to initiatives such as Kpone Zero Waste Composting project and Soil Farmacy, AERC's community waste-to-soil concept, which seeks to transform organic waste into compost, biochar and other soil-enhancing products while creating livelihood and learning opportunities for young people and supporting smallholder farmers.

Through this work, AERC is demonstrating that zero waste is not only an environmental goal. It is also an opportunity to create healthier communities, restore degraded soils, strengthen local food systems and generate dignified green livelihoods.



ZERO WASTE ACADEMY 2026 PHOTO GALLERY



ARTICLES AND PRESS RELEASES FEATURED

Throughout the reporting period, AERC continued to use storytelling, articles and media engagement to bring greater public attention to community environmental challenges and emerging climate solutions.

Our communications highlighted the importance of community-led environmental action, youth participation, climate justice, environmental education and the often-overlooked relationship between climate activism and personal well-being. AERC also contributed its voice to public conversations on plastic pollution, waste management and environmental governance, including advocacy supporting stronger action against harmful single-use materials such as Styrofoam.

These articles and media engagements enabled lessons from our community work to reach audiences beyond the immediate locations where our activities were implemented. They also helped position the experiences, ideas and leadership of young people and local communities within wider environmental discussions.

For AERC, communication is not simply about documenting activities. It is an important tool for influencing public understanding, strengthening accountability and inspiring collective action.



AERC Ghana backs styrofoam ban

-Calls for National Transition Plan

face challenges if affordable and practical alternatives are not made available before the ban takes effect.

"A ban is only the beginning," the organisation noted. "The transition away from styrofoam must protect the environment without punishing the people and businesses who need support to change."

To ensure a smooth transition, AERC Ghana urged government and regulatory agencies to publish clear implementation guidelines outlining which products will be banned, permissible alternatives and enforcement procedures.

The organisation also called for increased support for locally produced, reusable and environmentally friendly packaging solutions, warning against replacing styrofoam with other harmful single-use products.

It further appealed for targeted education and support programmes for

deadline.

"Are we foam-free ready?" the organisation asked, urging institutions and households to begin making sustainable packaging choices now.

AERC Ghana said the phase-out should be viewed as an opportunity to promote innovation, strengthen waste reduction systems, support cleaner business practices and protect communities from the long-term environmental costs associated with disposable packaging.

The organisation reaffirmed

its commitment to advocating for policies that reduce plastic pollution and promote responsible consumption while ensuring that the transition remains fair, inclusive and supportive of vulnerable groups and small businesses.

"The EPA's announcement is welcome. But Ghana must now move from announcement to action, from prohibition to preparation, and from wasteful convenience to responsible alternatives," the statement concluded.



Wednesday, 10th June, 2026

DAILY ANALYST

Page 9

Opinion

Quietly, Everything Changes

By Yvette Ahenkorah

Climate Change Is Already Here

Climate change is not merely an environmental concern reserved for policy rooms, international conferences, or scientific reports. It is an everyday reality. It is slowly, and often quietly, becoming part of the lived experience of our communities, cities, households, and livelihoods. Many of the climate realities we face do not always appear in dramatic ways. Sometimes, they show up as flash floods in communities such as Dansoman, Weija, Taifa, and parts of the Odaw Basin after only a few hours of heavy

community ownership, and a shared understanding of the challenges people face every day. Whether through engaging residents on sustainable waste management practices, supporting environmental awareness initiatives, advocating for more resilient communities, or creating platforms for dialogue on climate and urban development, we have seen how communities become powerful agents of change when they are equipped with knowledge, resources, and opportunities to act.

We have also seen that environmental challenges which may appear isolated are often deeply connected to broader

Building Resilience Together

In many communities, climate action begins with practical steps that may seem small but carry significant impact. It begins with protecting and restoring green spaces, reducing waste, embracing sustainable farming practices, safeguarding natural waterways, and promoting responsible environmental stewardship. It begins with recognising that resilience is not something imposed from outside, but something cultivated from within communities themselves. Perhaps one of the most important lessons climate change teaches us is that our relationship with

infrastructure. Institutions must support communities with resources and technical capacity. Civil society must continue to mobilise, educate, and hold systems accountable. Communities and individuals must also recognise their power to act before disasters occur. Working with communities has reinforced a simple but powerful truth: people care about the future when they can see how it connects to their present. Climate action becomes meaningful when it speaks to the flooded street after a storm, the farmer worried about the next planting season, the family struggling through extreme heat, or the community

Resilient Communities

Sustainable Agriculture
Environmental Education
Flood Prevention
Sustainable Waste Management
Tree Planting & Green Spaces
Climate resilience is not something we wait for. It is something we build together, through the choices we make, the systems we change, and the actions we take every single day.

Quietly, everything is changing. The question is whether we will change with it, deliberately, urgently, and together.

The author, Yvette Ahenkorah, is a climate advocate and civil society professional with interests in sustainability, resilience, and urban

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Promoting Inclusive Cities Through the Urban Dignity Campaign



As part of our Urban Dignity Campaign, AERC Ghana used digital platforms to promote conversations about what it truly means to build cities that respect people and protect their well-being and raised awareness safety precautions during the floods in Ghana.

The campaign highlighted that urban development should not be measured only by new roads, buildings and physical infrastructure. It must also be measured by whether people, particularly those living in underserved communities, can access safe housing, clean surroundings, proper sanitation, reliable public services and inclusive public spaces.

Through targeted social media messages, AERC drew attention to challenges such as flooding, poor sanitation, inadequate infrastructure and unequal access to essential services.

The campaign called on communities, urban planners, local authorities and decision-makers to place human dignity, climate resilience and social inclusion at the centre of urban development. The Urban Dignity Campaign reinforced AERC's belief that every person deserves to live in a community that is safe, clean, inclusive and resilient, regardless of their location or economic circumstances.



Virtual Roundtable on



Indo-Afro Lessons on Extreme Heat, Health, and Livelihood Action



Thursday, June 11, 2026



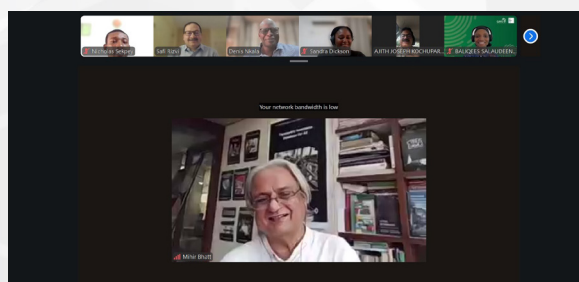
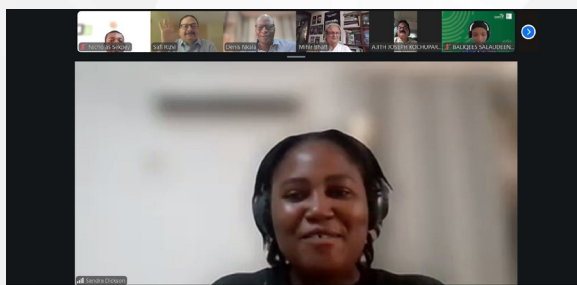
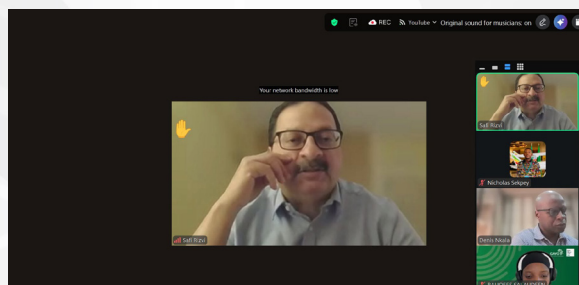
FROM EARLY WARNING TO EARLY ACTION

AERC Hosts Africa–India Roundtable on Extreme Heat, Health and Livelihoods

On 11 June 2026, AERC Ghana, in collaboration with the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, convened a virtual roundtable on **“Indo-Afro Lessons on Extreme Heat, Health and Livelihood Action.”** The session brought together experts and practitioners from Africa and India to explore practical responses to extreme heat, including early warning systems, health protection, climate technology, livelihood security and heat-resilient infrastructure.

Participants emphasised that extreme heat must be integrated into long-term development planning, governance and public service delivery rather than treated as a seasonal emergency. The discussion also highlighted the need for people-centred early warning systems and stronger use of climate data, technology and innovation to protect vulnerable workers, informal settlements, small businesses and at-risk communities.

AERC’s Nature-Based Solutions Lead, Sandra Efua Attah Dickson, delivered the opening remarks, with contributions from Safi Ahsan Rizvi, Dr Elvis Kyere-Gyeabour, Richard Matey, Rehanaben Riyawala and Dr Denis Nkala. AERC appreciates all the speakers and participants for supporting this important Africa–India knowledge exchange and advancing practical, inclusive and locally led solutions to extreme heat.





Virtual Roundtable on

Indo-Afro Lessons on Extreme Heat, Health, and Livelihood Action

Thursday, June 11, 2026

4:00 PM to 5:30 PM IST (+ 05:30 UTC)

Registration Link: <https://tinyurl.com/4ne68m7e>

OPENING REMARKS

SPEAKERS

CLOSING REMARKS



Scan here to register



OUR QUARTER'S SIGNATURE EVENT

Youth Climate Joy & Healing Festival 2026

Creating Space for Climate Action, Well-Being and Connection

One of the defining highlights of the period was the inaugural Youth Climate Joy & Healing Festival, held from 14 to 15 August 2026 at the University of Environment and Sustainable Development in Somanya.

With support from the UMI Fund, the two-day festival brought together 50 young climate advocates, leaders, artists and community builders for a unique experience centred on climate justice, well-being, healing, creative expression and meaningful connection.

Climate action is often communicated through the language of crisis, loss and urgency. While these realities cannot be ignored, the emotional and mental well-being of the young people carrying the work receives far less attention.

The festival was created to respond to this gap.

Through reflective conversations, wellness activities, storytelling, creative expression, cultural learning and peer exchange, participants explored how climate change affects not only communities and ecosystems but also people's emotions, relationships and sense of hope.

Sessions examined themes including climate well-being, leading from wholeness, culture as a climate memory bank, youth collaboration, adaptation and community-based climate action. Participants connected environmental challenges such as heat, flooding, waste, erosion and livelihood loss with their emotional and social consequences.

The gathering gave young people permission to slow down, breathe, share their experiences and recognise that caring for themselves is not separate from climate action. It is part of what makes sustained and meaningful leadership possible.

The festival carried a powerful message:

"Healing is climate work, too."

Participants left with renewed connections, practical ideas and a deeper understanding that they are not navigating the demands of climate leadership alone. Their individual journeys form part of a wider movement rooted in courage, community, dignity and care.

The Youth Climate Joy & Healing Festival was more than an event. It was an investment in the resilience of the people working to build a more just and sustainable future.

YOUTH CLIMATE JOY & HEALING FESTIVAL 2026

PHOTO GALLERY



WHAT THIS PERIOD TAUGHT US

The experiences of May to August reaffirmed several important lessons:

- 1.** Communities already possess valuable knowledge about the environmental challenges affecting them.
- 2.** Young people are ready to lead when they are given meaningful opportunities, practical knowledge and trusted spaces.
- 3.** Environmental education is most powerful when learning is connected to action.
- 4.** Local environmental challenges must be connected to wider policy and climate-justice discussions.
- 5.** Climate movements become stronger when the well-being of their leaders and activists is protected.
- 6.** Sustainable solutions must be inclusive, community-owned and grounded in local realities.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into the final months of 2026, AERC remains committed to strengthening community-led environmental action, expanding environmental education and creating meaningful opportunities for young people, women and rural communities.

We will continue to advance our work in zero waste and composting, clean energy access, environmental governance, climate education, youth leadership and community resilience. We are also committed to translating the knowledge gained through our recent training and fellowship programmes into practical initiatives that benefit the communities we serve.

Our work continues to be guided by a simple but powerful belief:

Sustainable change begins when communities are empowered to lead it.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the communities, young people, schools, facilitators, partners and stakeholders who contributed to our work during this period.

Together, we are building communities that are environmentally conscious, climate-resilient and empowered to shape a more sustainable future.

Join Us

Partner with AERC as we expand community-driven solutions for environmental sustainability, climate resilience and social empowerment.

To partner or sponsor, reach us on
info@aercghana.net



**ALLIANCE FOR EMPOWERING
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

website: <http://www.aercghana.org>



*Alliance for Empowering Rural
Communities*