

refined oil”

## Adding value

The quest to add value to Africa's huge natural resources brings into focus the gist of Professor Kwamina Panford's new book: *Africa's Natural Resources and Underdevelopment: How Ghana's Petroleum Can Create Sustainable Economic Prosperity*.

Panford is a professor of African Policy, Natural Resources & Development at Northeastern University, Boston.

Panford's book covers three major themes: One, Ghana's ongoing galamsey menace (illicit gold and diamond mining derived from broken English - "gather them to sell"; two, how Ghana is doing with respect to oil leases and ensuring that Ghana's oil and gas become "a blessing and not a curse"; and three, how Ghana can optimise the use of its petroleum and other natural resources.

The practical solutions are based on his experiences from Ghana and other African states, plus those of North America, Europe and Asia.

## Roots

Panford traces the growth of galamsey to the post 1986 mineral laws Ghana passed with the technical advice of its development partners, and

abandoned water-filled pits leading to the drowning of innocent citizens, and the dangers of working right underneath high tension electrical cables.

He explains in this easy-to-read book why and how galamsey came into existence and its adverse socio-economic and environmental consequences. Panford connects what happens in Ghana and Africa with global developments.

## Recommendations

Panford's book is recommended to all readers, including the secondary and tertiary youth. The ease of language without sacrificing technical details and relevant key terms offers much to aid the reader grasp what's going on with Ghana and Africa's bounty of resources: how Ghana's gas, for example, can be used to become a "socially transformative asset" for real economic prosperity for most Ghanaians.

He first lays out the negative health and environmental effects of using charcoal and firewood instead of a natural cooking gas from Jubilee and other oil fields in Ghana. This book is recommended for adoption as part of a new and progressive education and curriculum and as a guide to create a new

blueprint for avoiding the menace associated with the resource curse from the abuse and depletion of important natural resources.

Panford shows how Africa's tertiary institutions, especially the public universities, and committed stakeholders willing to truly transform Africa can use petroleum, gold, diamond, timber, oil palm, rubber, cobalt, uranium, cocoa, bauxite, and other rare earths to unleash a new economic growth on the continent.

Such progress can be based on creating salient, skill centred education, new infrastructure such as

Information and Communications Technology, rail lines, sea and water transport; converting raw cocoa beans into chocolate, butter, alcohol, and cosmetics, while petroleum may be used to produce refined fuel, plastics, petroleum jelly, skin products, and natural gas for cooking and baking bread and smoking fish.

He said the number one responsibility of African governments "is to create

"Jobs, jobs, jobs" by helping raise the youth with "skills, skills, skills" to avert what has been referred to as the "bulging African youth population being a ticking time bomb".

To the "doubting Thomases" and "Afro-pessimists", Panford alludes to the 1950s and 1960s manufacturing achievements such as the Made-in-Ghana Bona Tyres that outlasted the French made Michelin top brands, the Sanyo standing fan that moved in four different directions, GHOC drugs and even vehicle assemblies.

## New Argonauts

Panford's commitment to Ghana and Africa easily classifies him among a breed of people termed, "The New Argonauts". These may be professionals, scholars, technocrats, or entrepreneurs who contribute to the development of their home countries through their international knowledge and professional ties in technologically advanced countries. Because of their

cultural ties and institutional knowledge, they collaborate with home-country counterparts by circulating their brain power.

As this column is being written, Panford is now on another sabbatical at the Institute of Development Studies / University of Cape Coast (IDS/UCC) working with colleagues there on a "Baseline socio-economic survey of the six oil districts in Ghana". The survey will be used in the future to evaluate the impact of oil on the environment and on the people living in the affected areas.

It was once said by a Kenyan professor of law that in Africa those who have the power don't have the ideas, and those who have the ideas don't have the power. It's quite clear now that the two - the holders of power and the holders of the ideas - have to merge for the sake of salvaging a continent so rich in both human and material resources.

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• Prof. Kwamina Panford: Homeward minded