

**INAUGURATION OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES OF BEAF
(Saturday August 18, 2007, Accra)**

ADDRESS BY NATIONAL CHAIRMAN OF BONABOTO

Mr. Chairman,
Your Lordship Justice Atuguba,
Members of Board of Trustees,
Members of Technical Management Committee,
National Executive,
Invited Guests,
The Press,
Fellow Bonabotans, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction.

On 28th December 2001, Bonaboto established the Bonaboto Education Assistance Fund (BEAF). It was launched at the Black Star Hotel, Bolgatanga, in the Upper East Region. BEAF was to be implemented on achieving its initial target of at least ₵100 million cedis. There was a re-launch of the BEAF Fund on 2nd September, 2006 at which over three hundred million cedis was realized. The total amount to date stands at ₵591,059,750.00 or GH₵ 59,105.98 with ₵183,810,000.00 or GH₵ 18,381.00 outstanding as pledges yet to be redeemed. However, ₵384,393,000.00 or GH₵ 38,439.30 of the amount is in low risk investments.

Basis for BEAF.

"Basic education helps to break the cycle of poverty. It opens the door to increased income, better health, independence and prosperity. Without it, people are open to exploitation, excluded from many aspects of society and are more likely to be trapped in the cycle of poverty¹".

The Bonaboto area in the Upper East Region has been trapped in this circle of poverty; it is the poorest area in Ghana, and it records the lowest education and health indicators in the country. Indeed, available statistics show that the Upper East Region, where the Bonaboto area is located, is the poorest region in the country after the Upper West. Whilst the Upper West is reported to have a poverty level of 88% in 2005/2006, that of the Upper East is 70% over the same period. This contrasts with the national figure of 28%². The three Northern Regions are the poorest in Ghana according to the fifth Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 5)³. The donor community has even expressed concern about this widening gap of poverty between the south and north of Ghana at their 2007 Consultative Group Conference.

It may be justifiable to suggest that the increase in poverty in Greater Accra is due to the migration of northerners to the city for menial jobs such as 'Kayayee'. When the Akosombo Reservoir is empty because of lack of sufficient rainfall in the dam's catchment area, most Ghanaians are worried about the lack of electricity supply to them. Few think about the effect of the drought on the citizens of the north. If on the other hand there is too much rain which brings a lot of water to the reservoir, the same lack of thought and sympathy is given to the destruction caused by floods to the people of the north. It appears that the government and private investors are concentrating investments in the south to the neglect of the north. This willful marginalization of the north by governments is detrimental to the overall development and growth of this

¹ Oxfam International (2001) Education Charges: A Tax on Human Development (Oxfam Briefing Paper No. 3)

² Public Agenda No. 271 Friday Edition, June 22, 2007 Page 3

³ Public Agenda No 266 Friday Edition, May 11, 2007 Page 7

country. Ghana is a unitary state and like the human body, if one part suffers pain, it is the whole body that suffers. It is like a communicable disease that knows no boundaries. Therefore, neglecting the north is only postponing the day of reckoning and when it comes, it can only be manifold worse for the north in particular and the country as a whole. Bonaboto therefore joins the call by chiefs of the north on government to fast track the development of Ghana by establishing a well funded Development Plan for Northern Ghana.

With respect to education, the Upper East Region has a literacy rate of 12.4 % as against a national average of 47.9% and a school dropout rate of 24 % as against 4% for Accra⁴.

It is even more frightening when one descends to the Bonaboto area, which covers the Bolgatanga, Bongo and Talensi-Nabdam Districts of the Upper East region. With a population density of 203 persons per sq. km, it is described as the “poorest [area] of the poor [areas]”

The level of poverty in the area cannot be de-linked from the poor state of education in the area. In Ghana, the acceptable minimum pupil-teacher ratio is 40:1. In the Bonaboto area, it is 90:1. For every 10 children of school going age in the Bonaboto area, only 3 are in school. There is no secondary school in the Bonaboto area, which belongs to the “Group of 45 Secondary Schools” that contributes 97% of the total population of students in the county’s universities. The Bonaboto area has none of these prestigious or endowed schools and few students struggle to qualify for tertiary institutions from the less endowed schools in the area. Even then, the few students who qualify for the tertiary institutions encounter problems enrolling in such institutions due to lack of financial resources. As a result, some of them drop out for financial reasons. And with the decrease in government spending in the social services sector, such as health and education, the introduction of academic user fees in our universities, access to good quality education for the people of the area poses a serious challenge, which requires serious attention, including contributions from the people of the area.

Of course, education is a right. As such, the State always has the obligation to protect, promote and fulfill the right to education. This obligation is well stated in Article 25 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. It provides that:

*“... basic education shall be **free, compulsory and available to all**; secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education; higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education; functional literacy shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible; the development of a system of schools with adequate facilities at all levels shall be actively pursued”.*

Free education ensures the availability of primary education without charge to the child, parents or guardians and discourages imposition of fees either by the Government, the local authorities or the school, and other direct costs, as they constitute disincentives to the enjoyment of the right to education.⁵ Compulsory education means that “...neither parents, nor guardians, nor the State are entitled to treat as optional the decision as to whether the child should have access to primary education”⁶

⁴ See the various GLSS(1-4)

⁵ Para 7, General Comment No. 11

⁶ Para 6, General Comment No. 11

As a result of our ardent conviction that education can significantly reduce poverty and malnutrition, and the fact that there are competing demands on the government budget, well meaning citizens of the area started the BEAF. Of course, this is not without the active support of other concerned people who have contributed in diverse ways towards the BEAF. We are grateful to them all.

Objectives of the BEAF

The Bonaboto Education Assistance Fund (the Fund) has both short and long term objectives. The short term objectives include:

- To support needy but brilliant students at the secondary and tertiary level
- Support the development of Farefare ["Frafra"] textbooks and primers
- To support Bonaboto basic schools with requisite text books

The long term objectives include supplementing the supply of teaching and learning materials to schools in the area, as well as providing and improving education infrastructure (libraries, classrooms, furniture, etc).

BEAF is intended to offer the following types of assistance to beneficiaries: payment of school fees and charges; purchase of basic textbooks; provision of school uniform; payment of travel and transport expenses, among others.

Management Structure

The leadership of Bonaboto is committed to transparent and accountable management of the fund and has therefore decided on a management structure to achieve this commitment.

The guidelines setting up the Fund therefore requires that a Technical Management Committee (TMC) and a Board of Trustees manage the BEAF for and on behalf of Bonaboto.

A The Technical Management Committee (TMC)

1. The TMC is a subcommittee of BONABOTO at the National level who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund. The TMC has the following additional functions:
 - a) To raise and invest monies or revenues accrued prudently;
 - b) To review applications to access the Fund;
 - c) To disburse money to beneficiaries with the approval of the Board of trustees and in accordance with the budget approved by Congress;
 - d) To keep proper books of Accounts and Financial records of the Fund, and
 - e) To perform any other function that Congress may assign to it.
- 2 The TMC (the Committee) is chaired by the National Vice–Chairperson of Bonaboto, and has a Secretary and an Accountant appointed by the Executive Council (EC), and four other members appointed by Congress. These persons are nominated to the membership of the TMC based purely on the technical expertise or interest of each person.
- 3 The TMC shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees, which shall report to Congress periodically and as determined by Congress. When Congress is not in session, the Board of Trustees shall report to the EC. The report shall include statements of accounts and details of beneficiaries, which should be posted at the Bonaboto website for the information of all stakeholders.

- 4 The EC shall ensure that copies are served on all functional regional branches for the information of members? Such reports should also be available to any member upon request and at a fee to cover the cost of photocopying the report(s).
- 5 In the disbursement of the Fund, the TMC shall ensure equity at the various levels of education and the Bonaboto areas.

B. The Board of Trustees

- 1) The Board of Trustees (the Board) shall be comprised of between 5 and 11 members, four of whom shall be members of Bonaboto in good standing as follows: Bolgatanga area and its environs; Nabdam area and its environs; Bongo area and its environs; Tongo area and its environs - one person each.
- 2) For the purpose of this section, a "member of Bonaboto in good standing" means a member who, having been registered as a member, does not owe Bonaboto, either in dues or any financial obligations imposed on him/her as a member, has contributed to the Fund and attends meetings and other functions of Bonaboto regularly.
- 3) The Board will oversee and supervise the Technical Management Committee in the management of the Fund, propose policies, and generally develop strategic plans that will ensure the sustainability of the Fund, approve nominations for benefits and disbursements, and any other matters that Congress may assign to it.
- 4) The Board shall report to Congress through the EC once every year.

Criteria for Selection to Benefit from BEAF

To qualify to access the Fund, the following minimum conditions must be met:

- a) The applicant must be poorest of the poor, needy and brilliant
- b) The applicant must come from the Bonaboto area.
- c) The applicant must submit a written application to the TMC
- d) The application may be made either by the applicant or by the parent/guardian,
- e) The application must state the circumstances of the applicant that requires that he/she be assisted.
- f) In the case of educational infrastructure, the application must be submitted by the school requiring assistance and it should be endorsed by the DCE of the area. The application should also confirm that the school authorities and the District Assembly have been unable to provide the infrastructure from all its available resources.
- g) The applicant must complete a form.

BEAF Implementation

At the recent National Delegates Congress of BONABOTO held at Bolgatanga from 27th to 31st December, 2006, Congress decided to implement the BEAF with immediate effect. Congress decided that a maximum of ₵100,000,000.00 would be disbursed as support for needy but brilliant students and another ₵50,000,000.00 for the development of the Gurene Language. These levels must certainly conform with the guidelines approved by Congress.

The successful implementation of these congress decisions requires the establishment of the two statutory bodies for the administration of the BEAF. It has taken us pretty good time to appoint members to these two bodies mandated by Congress to run the BEAF but I am happy that today we are here to inaugurate them to start work immediately. It is my hope that you will all give them the necessary support and encouragement be it financial or otherwise to enable them execute their mandate to the letter and spirit of BEAF.

It is with pleasure that I now introduce the members of the Board of Trustees. I am not presenting them in any order of merit. They are:

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| 1. Alhaji M.S. Sulana | 6. Mr Gilbert Abayeta - Bolga |
| 2. Mr Vitus Azeem | 7. Dr Agnes Apusiga - Bongo |
| 3. Mr Charles Ayamdoo | 8. Mr David Alleonu - Nabdam |
| 4. Dr Thomas Akabzaa | 9. Mr Francis Zulom - Talensi |
| 5. Mr Lance Adoguba | |

The TMC members are:

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Mr Lance Adoguba (Chairman). | 2. Mr Wilbert Namkatoti (Accountant). |
| 3. Mr Apana Adagzina (Secretary). | 4. Mr John O.B. Salifu (Bongo) |
| 5. Mr Nicholas Kolog (Nabdam) | 6. Mr Dedacus Afegra (Bolga) |
| 7. Mr Joseph Abugre (Talensi) | |

Conclusion

It is the expectation of all members of Bonaboto and others who have the welfare of the Bonaboto area at heart that these two bodies work dedicatedly and diligently for the speedy realisation of the objectives of BEAF.

It is also my cherished dream and prayer that the members of these august committees would be unrelenting in their pursuit of transparency in the disbursement of these funds. This is critical to winning the confidence of the numerous well wishers who have sacrificed to make this dream a reality. It would also ensure that our future effort at ensuring the sustainability of the fund is enhanced. I cannot conclude without thanking the numerous well wishers whose sacrifice and contributions have made the BEAF dream a reality today.

Inauguration

I now have the singular pleasure and honour to inaugurate the Technical Management Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Bonaboto Education Assistance Fund and consequently declare them inaugurated.

I now crave the indulgence of His Lordship Justice Atuguba of the Supreme Court of Ghana to duly swear them to office.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND PATIENCE

Ing. Matthew ADOMBIRE
(18th August, 2007)