



Promoting Excellence in Knowledge

GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

ANNUAL LECTURE IN THE SCIENCES, 2023

TOPIC

FOOD AND PUBLIC HEALTH

If it's Not Safe, it's not Food, and if it's not Healthy, it's not Good Food: Unpacking Current Consensus and Tensions in the Food and Public Health Nutrition Landscape.



SPEAKER

Professor

PROF. AMOS LAAR, FGA

Professor of Public Health Nutrition, University of Ghana School of Public Health, Accra

**CHAIRPERSON: EMERITA PROFESSOR
ISABELLA AKYINBAH QUAKYI, FGA**
Vice President, Sciences Section, GAAS



DATE: THURSDAY OCTOBER **05** 2023 | **TIME:** 5:30 PM
VENUE: GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AUDITORIUM

#3 Research Crescent, Casely Hayford Road, Airport Residential Area, Accra

LIVE ON



MEETING ID

835-5221-3512



Ghana Academy of
Arts and Sciences



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ABOUT THE CHAIRPERSON
Emerita Professor
ISABELLA AKYINBAH QUAKYI, FGA
Vice President, Sciences Section, GAAS

Emerita Professor Isabella Akyinbah Quakyi is a Professor of Immunology and Parasitology, University of Ghana (UG). The first Emerita Professor in the Sciences at the University of Ghana. Educated at Achimota Secondary School (64 year Group), Accra. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honors) degree in Human Biology and Immunology from University of Surrey, England, 1973, an MSc in Applied Immunology from Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex, England 1978, and a PhD in Immunoparasitology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), England, 1980.

For the past four decades, she has taught and researched at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Maryland and Georgetown University, Washington DC, both in the USA, and University of Ghana (UG), Legon. Her teaching and research have focused on malaria immunity, immunoparasitology, immunopathology, immunodiagnosis, autoimmunity, molecular immunology and vaccine development. She co-initiated and co-led the first NIH International Center of Infectious Diseases Research (ICIDR), a research partnership between Georgetown University and University of Yaounde I, Cameroon (1990 – 2001). This program built enormous academic scholarship and research capacity in laboratory and field research in Cameroon. She attained Full Professorship of Immunology and Parasitology at UG in 2001.

At the University of Ghana she established the Immunology Unit at NMIMR 1980 - 1983. She was the first female Director of the UG School of Public Health (UGSPH) and the Foundation Dean of UGSPH, also making her the first female Dean in the College of Health Sciences in the University of Ghana 2002-2007. At UG she built substantial international research capacity, academic scholarship, and the leadership needed to build capacity for Public Health. She remains passionate about Biomedical Research Development and Knowledge Translation. She has over 100 publications including books and scholarly articles.

She has served on numerous National and International Committees and Boards and received several awards; a former member of Ghana Health Service Council, and former UNESCO Chair for Women in Science and Technology in the West Africa Region. She won the 2014 Laureate African Union Kwame Nkrumah Award for Women in Science. She is the 2019 laureate for the Clara Southmayd Ludlow award by the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH). Women's World day 2021 recognized her as one of seven women in Science who have changed our world for the better. She is a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

PROF. AMOS LAAR, FGA

Professor of Public Health Nutrition, University
of Ghana School of Public Health, Accra

Amos Laar is a Professor of Public Health Nutrition at the University Of Ghana School Of Public Health, Accra, Ghana. Educated at Tamale Secondary School, Tamale, the University of Ghana, Legon, and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, he holds a BSc Degree in Nutrition and Biochemistry; MPH, and PhD Degrees in Public Health, as well as MA in Bioethics. He has also successfully completed the African Nutrition Leadership Training from North-West University, South Africa, and the Executive Leadership Development Program from Harvard Business School, USA.

He spent the decade spanning 2005 and 2015 exploring how the socio-cultural, socio-ethical, and medico-ethical dimensions of public health could be leveraged to promote the health of women living with HIV. Currently, his research and professional practice straddle two distinct, yet related areas of public health – bioethics and public health nutrition. Overall, his work examines how social forces, commercial forces, and structural violence influence realization of health.

He is an active researcher having served as the lead or collaborating researcher of over 25 successful research projects with a total grant value of over 20 million US Dollars. Some of his recent research projects include:

- the IDRC-funded 'MEALS4NCDs Project' (PI: Laar) which provides Measurements, Evaluation, Accountability and Leadership Support for NCDs prevention in Ghana.
- the IDRC/Rockefeller Foundation-funded 'Healthier Diets for Healthy Lives Project' (PI: Laar), which is supporting Ghana's Ministry of Health to develop a Nutrient Profiling Model to facilitate the implementation of a bundle of double-duty food-based policies.
- the Advocating for Ghana's Health Project (PI: Laar) which aimed to create a favorable environment and stakeholder buy-in for a sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) tax in Ghana.
- the European Commission-Funded AfriFOODlinks Project (Co-I: Laar) which aims to transform urban food environments through effective linkages among 35 partners across 65+ cities in the African and European continents.

Prof. Laar is the PI of the NIH-funded New York University-University of Ghana Research Integrity Training Programme (2018 – 2028), which has facilitated the establishment of the first-ever MSc Programme in Bioethics in Ghana - at the University of Ghana. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed papers in very reputable journals including the Lancet, Health and Place, PLoS One, Advances in Nutrition, Public Health Nutrition, Food Policy.

Prof. Laar avails his expertise to state and non-state actors including civil society organisations and United Nations (UN) Agencies. He advises the Government of Ghana on various public health nutrition issues (including food systems transformation, and development of food-based double-duty policies). In 2011, he was a participant in the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York, USA. He has served as an expert reviewer of WHO guidelines (including guidelines on carbohydrate intake for adults and children; saturated fatty acid and trans-fatty acid intake for adults and children; non-sugar sweetener use; food-based dietary guidelines; low-sodium salt substitutes).

He has served on reputable National and International Committees including his recent curatorial role in Ghana's Food Systems Transformation Dialogues. Prof. Laar is a member of the Food Systems Countdown Initiative, an effort that is monitoring global food systems transformation.

In 2019, he was recognized in the Lancet (Diabetes and Endocrinology) for his efforts at combating diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Ghana. Recently, he led a coalition of civil society organizations and academics to mount a successful advocacy intervention in support of Ghana's Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Taxation. He served as the President of the African Nutrition Society from 2016 to 20220. He is a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Prof. Laar is married to Dr. Matilda Laar, and they are blessed with four children – Amos Ethan, Hans Lael, Elia Zoey, and Ava Chloe.

FOOD AND PUBLIC HEALTH

If it's not Safe, it's not Food, and if it's not Healthy, it's not Good Food: Unpacking Current Consensus and Tensions in the Food and Public Health Nutrition Landscape.

Food and Public Health are inseparable. We talk about food in terms of safe food, healthy food, junk food, unhealthy food, and ultra-processed food. The healthiness of food (or lack thereof) is influenced by multiple factors including food marketing, food fraud, food policy, food politics, food justice, food democracy, and food environments. Of equal importance are the impacts of unhealthy food on human health and planetary health. Such impacts include hunger, and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) - obesity, hypertension, stroke, ischemic heart disease, and diabetes.

As is the case in many countries across Africa currently, the cardinal public health problems that Ghana faces are diet-related NCDs amidst food insecurity and micronutrient malnutrition. Over one-third of all adult deaths (most of which are premature) are attributable to diet-related NCDs (stroke, ischemic heart disease, and diabetes). If untamed, NCDs will be the leading cause of death in Ghana by 2030. While the causes of diet-related NCDs are complex, involving multiple interacting risk factors, dietary risk factors such as excessive consumption of too salty, too sugary, too fatty calorie-dense nutrient-poor foods like sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) and other ultra-processed foods are paramount.

Responding to these food and public health challenges can give rise to an array of tensions. These tensions need to be meaningfully balanced. This talk will reassert the links between food and public health and enunciate the tensions. Prof. Laar will explore food from multiple perspectives – historical, political, sociological, philosophical, and public health. He will unpack the current consensus, but also tensions in public health nutrition – including what is considered good food (safe and healthy). He will reaffirm the oft-cited proclamation that “if it's not safe, it's not food” and go further to argue that since food must not kill, both unsafe and unhealthy foods are not good foods.

Enriched with lived-experience exemplars, Prof. Laar will share how his context-relevant food environments research, the establishment of public interest coalition, the implementation of evidence-informed advocacy, and scholar activism have valorized and increased demand for healthy food policies (including food-related health taxes) in Ghana. Ghana has recently launched its first-ever food-based dietary guidelines and enacted a tax law that imposes a 20% tax on SSB and other health-harming products. Ghana is also currently developing a double-duty food-based policy bundle (comprising marketing regulations, front-of-pack nutrition labelling policy, food-related fiscal policy, and public food procurement policy).

Journeying through Ghana's historical and extant food-focused policy, Prof Laar will argue that structural interventions are needed to address the current menace of food-related ill-health. He will call on the government of Ghana to implement comprehensive policy measures - a mix of low-agency and high-agency food policy interventions to inform and empower consumers: to guide and influence consumers; to discourage consumption of unhealthy foods, and to incentivize the consumption of healthier foods. Such actions will make food actors take actions that make unhealthy food unattractive and unavailable, and the converse holds true. It is possible to make healthy food policies nudge the food systems to work for people, profits, prosperity, and the planet.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

- 5:30 PM
Welcome Address and Introduction of Chairman
Prof. George Obeng-Adjei, FGA,
Assistant Honorary Secretary, Sciences Section, GAAS
- Chairman's Remarks and Introduction of Speaker
Emerita Professor Isabella Akyinbah Quakyi, FGA
Vice President, Sciences Section, GAAS
- Lecture Begins
- Chairman's Closing Remarks
- Honorary Secretary's Remarks
- Closing [Guests to pick up bagged refreshments in the foyer]

ANNUAL LECTURES

The Academy instituted the Annual Lectures in the Sciences and Humanities in 1993, with a view to creating a platform where Fellows could take turns in addressing topical issues in the humanities and the sciences.

Annual Lectures delivered in the Sciences and the Arts from 2003 are as follows:

SCIENCES

- 2003 Water: A Crisis in Development; *Letitia E. Obeng*.
- 2005 The Landscape industry in Sustainable Environmental Management; *J.C. Norman*.
- 2006 Avian Influenza Symposium, GAAS and College of Physicians and Surgeons Collaboration.
- 2007 Who is a Sick Cell Person; *S. K. Addae*.
- 2008 Managing the Impact of Climate Change on Food Security: Some Post-Production Options for Ghana; *S. Sefa-Dedeh*.
- 2009 Technology for Development in Resource-Poor Countries, *W. S. Albassan*.
- 2010 The Threat of Counterfeit and Substandard Drugs to Healthcare Delivery in Developing Countries; *I. Addae-Mensah*.
- 2012 Clay; Its Benefits to Mankind; *V. P. Y. Gadzekpo*.
- 2013 Naturally Occurring Radioactivity in Our Homes; *Aba Bentil Andam*.
- 2015 Galamsey: Effects on Soil Productivity; *Y. Abenkorah, and E. Owusu-Bennoah*.
- 2017 Stress and Rest: Pharmacodynamic Modulation for Sustainable Human Health; *Arthur C. Sackeyfio*.
- 2018 Plants and Human Development; *G.K.S. Aflakpui*.
- 2019 Is Ghana on the Brink of Ecological Suicide? *Rose E. M. Entsua-Mensah*.
- 2020 Biodiversity Conservation, Genetic Resources, Gene Sequencing and the Nagoya Protocol: Challenges, Dilemmas and Opportunities; *Alfred A. Oteng-Yeboah*.
- 2021 Self And Non-self: The Marvel Of The Human Immune System; *Isabella A. Quakyi*
- 2022 The Science of Oware Board ; *Dr. Nii Narku Quaynor*

ARTS

- 2004 Language, the Mass Media and Democracy in Ghana; *K. Yankab*.
- 2005 Parliamentary Vetting and our Constitutional Democracy; *G. K. Acquah*.
- 2007 Military Technology, the Nkrumah Government and Ghana Armed Forces; *S. K. Addae*.
- 2008 The African Family in Crisis: The Case of Ghana; *G. K. Nukunya*.
- 2009 Signposts to Healthy Politics in Ghana; *J.R.A. Ayee*.
- 2010 Language, Africa, and the Art of being Human; *M. E. Kropp-Dakubu*.
- 2012 Peaceful Electoral Environment and Elections: The Role of Stakeholders; *E. Asante*.
- 2013 The Constitutional Phrase 'We the People' and the Politics of Inclusion; *K. Gyekye*.
- 2016 Scholarly Publishing in Africa and the Role of the Open Access Initiative (OAI);

- A. A. Alemna.
- 2017 Of Demolished University Gates in a Fourth Republic: Is Academic Freedom under Siege; *K. Yankab.*
- 2018 Migration, Farmer-herder Conflicts and Insecurity in Ghana: Unravelling the Recent Violent Incidents in The Afram Plains; *Prof. Steve Tonah.*
- 2021 Divinity and Epidemiology: Religion and Public Health in The History of Pandemics in Africa (1918-2020); *J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu.*
- 2022 Right to Information and Its Impact on Ghana; *Justice Sir Dennis Dominic Adjei.*

THE ACADEMY

The Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences is Ghana's Premier Learned Society. It was founded in November 1959 by Government Instrument of Incorporation. Its aim is to bring together the highest level of intellectuals, experts, professionals in the country to constitute a 'Think Tank' in the Arts and Sciences to enable it advise government and other relevant bodies on issues of importance to national development.

Mission:

The mission of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences is to encourage the creation, acquisition, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge for national development through the promotion of learning.

Objectives:

The Academy's objectives are to:

- Promote the study, extension, and dissemination of knowledge of the Arts and Sciences;
- Promote the establishment and maintenance of proper standards of endeavour in all fields of the arts and sciences;
- Recognize outstanding contributions to the advancement of the arts and sciences in Republic of Ghana;
- Contribute actively to the advancement of Ghana and Africa in particular and the world in general by examining and addressing issues of development; and
- Do any other things that are conducive or incidental to the attainment of all or any of the foregoing objectives.

NOTES

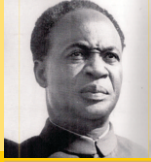
PRESIDENTS

GHANA ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

[1959 - 2024]



Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, FGA
1959 - 1961



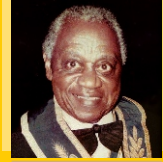
Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, FGA
1961 - 1966



Mr. Justice N.A. Ollennu, FGA
1969 - 1972



Prof. E.A. Boateng, FGA
1973 - 1976



Prof. C.O. Essmon, FGA
1977 - 1980



Prof. F.G.T. Torto, FGA
1981 - 1982



Most Rev. Prof. K.A. Dickson, FGA
1983 - 1986



Dr. E. Evans-Anom, FGA
1987 - 1990



Rev. Prof. C.G. Baata, FGA
1991 - 1992



Prof. D.A. Bekoe, FGA
1993 - 1996



Prof. J.H. Kwashina Nketia, FGA
1997 - 1998



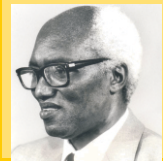
Prof. Prof. T. Sai, FGA
1999 - 2002



Nana Dr. S.K.B. Asante, FGA
2003 - 2006



Dr. Letitia E. Obeng, FGA
2007 - 2008



Prof. Reginald Fraser Amonoo, FGA
2009 - 2010



Prof. F.K.A. Allotey, FGA
2011 - 2014



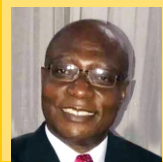
Prof. Akiagga Sawyer, FGA
2015 - 2016



Prof. Aba Bentil Andam, FGA
2017 - 2019



Justice Prof. Henrietta J.A.N.
Mensa-Bonsu, FGA (2019 - 2020)



Emeritus Prof. Samuel Sefa-Dedeh, FGA
2021 - 2022



Prof. Kofi Opoku Nti, FGA
2023 - 2024

OFFICE & LOCATION ADDRESS:

P.O. Box M32, Accra-Ghana, #3 Research Crescent,
Casely Hayford Road, Airport Residential Area, Accra

ENQUIRIES



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