

SECTION

5

CONTRIBUTION OF  
THE THREE MAJOR  
RELIGIONS TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
GHANA



# STUDY OF RELIGIONS, GOD’S CREATION AND HUMANKIND

## Background to the study of religion

### Introduction

In this section you will be introduced to the contributions of the three major religions to the development of Ghana. Specifically, the focus will be on the concept of development and the contributions of AIR, Christianity and Islam to the development of Ghana. This undoubtedly, will help you to appreciate how religion has shaped Ghana’s development, including its social, economic, and cultural aspects. As future leaders of the nation, you will be encouraged to promote every religious value that promotes holistic development of the nation for your generation and the generation unborn.

### At the end of this section, you will be able to:

Discuss the contributions of the three major religions to the development of Ghana

### Key Idea

Development is the process of growth, progress and positive change. National development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. The indicators of national development include economic, social, environmental and education. All the three major religions in Ghana have contributed positively to the national development of Ghana.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

### Meaning of Development

The term “development” carries a number of meanings depending on the context in which it is used. The definitions below highlight different aspects of development, ranging from economic growth to human wellbeing, sustainability, social justice, political participation, cultural preservation and personal growth.

- i. **Economic Development:** “An increase in the production of goods and services in a country, usually accompanied by an increase in the standard of living” (World Bank). It is also the process where the per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time. (Various). It can therefore be seen as a process of growth combined with a change in the per capita income over a long period of time in a country.



- ii. **Human Development:** “A process of enlarging people’s choices and enhancing their well well-being and freedoms” (United Nations Development Programme)
- iii. **Social Development:** This entails a perceptible and definite change in attitudes of people and in their ways of life. This involves new attitudes to work, becoming more nationalistic, more sensitive to national issues, more patriotic, more responsible and disciplined, leading to the improvement in the standard of living of the people. (Mintah-Afari Emmanuel)
- iv. **Sustainable Development:** “Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission). It can also be described as the process of ensuring that development of a project can keep functioning effectively for a long time. (Minta-Afari Emmanuel)
- v. **Political development:** “The process of creating a more democratic and participatory political system” (Huntington)
- vi. **Community development:** This refers to “a relatively large group of people who have common values, interests, enduring ties, frequent interactions and a sense of closeness to one another and living in a location” (Various)

Putting these definitions together, development can be defined generally as the process of growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental components to the life of people. The components can also be moral.

*National Development:* This refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens and encompasses all aspects of development. National development is often pursued through government policies and programmes, investment in human capital and infrastructure, promotion of trade and commerce, international cooperation and partnership and so on.



**Fig. 5.1:** The Church of Pentecost Commissions New Health Facility at Abesewa



**Fig. 5.2:** The Ghana Muslim Mission Youth organises seminars and conferences for its members to provide life skills and entrepreneurial skills to help them become better persons.

### Activity 5.1

Watch the following short videos to support your understanding of the concept of national development.

- [First World vs Third World Countries - What's the Difference ? | Developing vs Developed Countries. \(youtube.com\)](#)
- [Developed and Developing Countries Lesson for Kids - Poor vs Rich Countries Lesson For Kids \(youtube.com\)](#)

Make notes on the characteristics of both developed and developing nations and share your findings with your class.

## Indicators of National Development

Indicators of development are statistics or metrics used to measure a country's progress towards achieving development goals. Listed below are some of common indicators of development:

1. **Economic Indicators:** Economic indicators of national development include Gross National Income (GNI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), GDP per capita, GDP growth rate, inflation rates, unemployment rates, poverty rates, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), export growth, infrastructure development. Human Development Index (HDI), trade balances, fiscal balances. An example of a positive economic indicator is when a country's exports outweigh its imports.

2. **Social indicators:** Social indicators of national development include life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy rates, education enrollment, access to healthcare, unemployment rates, social mobility, gender equality, crime rates, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, access to information and communication and so on. For instance, a low infant mortality rate indicates access to quality healthcare including prenatal care, skilled birth attendance and postnatal care.
3. **Environmental indicators:** These indicators help assess a country's environmental performance, sustainability and progress towards achieving environmental goals such as Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). These indicators include air quality index, water quality index, greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy share, sustainable agriculture and land use, urban environmental quality, disaster risk reduction and management. For example, a good air quality index indicates effective environmental regulations and enforcement, which is a sign of a developed country.
4. **Educational indicators:** These indicators help assess a nation's progress in education and its impact on national development as well as economic growth, social equality and human well being. They include literacy rates, enrollment rates, dropout rates, student-teacher ratio, education expenditure, access to education, quality of education, teacher training and development, curriculum relevance and quality, adult education and lifelong learning. For example, when the literacy rate in a country is high, it is an indication of access to quality education, which is a fundamental aspect of development.

## Steps to promote National Development

There are steps that nations can take to create an enabling environment for sustainable development, reduce poverty and inequality, improve living standards and achieve their developmental goals. Some of these steps are presented below;

1. **Promoting values:** promoting values can promote national development in several ways. Values such as respect, empathy, honesty, fairness, responsibility, perseverance, tolerance and inclusivity can help build a strong and cohesive society, which is essential for national development. Values bring about ethical leadership and governance, they foster a culture of transparency and accountability, they encourage respect for human rights and dignity, encourage active citizenship and participation, promote innovation and creativity which in turn support national development
2. **Promoting education:** By investing in education, nations can develop a skilled, informed, and productive population, leading to sustainable economic growth, social progress and overall national development. For instance, education brings about human capital formation as it develops peoples' skills, knowledge and competencies thereby creating a productive workforce.
3. **Empowering women:** Women's empowerment is a critical driver of national development, and its impact is felt across various aspects of society. By empowering

women, nations can tap into their full potential, leading to sustainable economic growth and overall national development. For example, allowing women access to education and employment can help reduce poverty.

4. **Negotiating strategic political relations:** By negotiating strategic political relations, nations can enhance economic growth and development, promote peace and security, foster international cooperation, encourage technology transfer and innovation and attract foreign investment. These are necessary for nations as they help achieve their developmental goals and improve their global standing.
5. **Reforming the systems of food and aid distribution:** The reformation of systems of food and aid distribution can promote national development in several ways. For instance, it ensures increased efficiency as the streamlining of distribution channels reduces waste and ensures resources reach those in need. It can also bring about reduced inequality because targeted distribution systems address specific needs, reducing inequality and promoting social justice. Reforming systems of food and aid distribution supports food security and public health as reliable distribution ensures consistent access to nutritious food.
6. **Developing rural areas:** By developing rural areas, nations can unlock their full potential, achieving sustainable and inclusive growth and promoting national development. Rural development brings about poverty reduction, agricultural growth, food security, economic diversification, human capital development, rural-urban linkages etc which are essential indicators of national development.
7. **Increasing agricultural outputs:** By increasing agricultural outputs, nations can ensure food security and improved nutrition, foster economic growth and employment opportunities, generate export earnings and stimulate industrial development, reduce poverty and improve rural livelihood, promotes environmental sustainability and rural development, increase government revenue for development and so on. Agricultural growth is a critical driver of national development with far-reaching impacts on the economy, food security and human well-being.
8. **Enlarging economic knowledge:** By enlarging economic knowledge nations can foster informed decision-making and effective economic planning, encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment, improve productivity and efficiency, optimise resource allocation, promote trade and investment, develop human capital, achieve economic diversification, reduce poverty and inequality, ensure environmental sustainability and enhance global competitiveness. Economic knowledge is therefore a powerful tool for promoting national development.
9. **Handling growth in urban areas:** Urban growth, if managed efficiently, can be a powerful driver of national development. This is because it can lead to the promotion of economic growth and innovation, enhancement of human capital and well being, development of infrastructure and environmental sustainability, fostering of cultural diversity and national unity, encouraging decentralisation and regional development.



10. **Eradicating poverty:** Poverty eradication can promote national development in the sense that it will lead to economic growth and development, improve human capital and well-being, reduce inequality and social unrest, promote political stability and economic mobility.
11. **Eradication of environmental degradation:** Environmental conservation is essential for national development as it safeguards national resources, promotes economic growth and enhances human well-being. Through environmental protections, nations can preserve natural resources and public health, generate economic benefits and increase food security, mitigate climate change and protect biodiversity, ensure water quality and enhance international reputation, support sustainable development and long term sustainability.
12. **Collaboration with all actors including religious or faith-based bodies:** Nations, by collaborating with actors like faith-based bodies can expand reach and trust in marginalised communities, leverage social services and community mobilisation, promote moral guidance and conflict resolution, advocate for policy changes and resource mobilisation, build capacity and promote holistic development. Collaboration with all actors including faith-based bodies can tap into their unique strengths, enhancing national development outcomes and fostering inclusive, sustainable development.

### Activity 5.2

1. Working in groups and with the help of the internet and other sources, research and discuss the concept of development including;
  - a. The meaning of development
  - b. Indicators of national development
  - c. Steps to promote national development

Make notes and summarise your findings under each heading. You may find the following resources helpful:

[Development: Meaning and Concept of Development \(sociologydiscussion.com\)](http://sociologydiscussion.com) [SEM4 GEOG HONS. CC9 TOPIC 6 Indicators of Development.pdf](http://SEM4_GEOG_HONS_CC9_TOPIC_6_Indicators_of_Development.pdf) ([govtgirlsekbalpur.com](http://govtgirlsekbalpur.com))

### Activity 5.3

1. Your teacher will assign you one of the following questions:
  - a. Does religion have a part to play in national development?
  - b. What contributions does religion make in national development?
  - c. What steps can religion take to promote national development?
2. Working with a colleague, or a small group, prepare and deliver a short presentation answering your assigned question.

### Activity 5.4

Arrange a visit to a person knowledgeable in the concept of development (for example a lecturer of Development Studies, or an Economics or Social Studies teacher) to find out more about the concept of development and indicators of national development in Ghana. Share your findings with a colleague or with your Religious Studies teacher. Alternatively, your teacher may arrange for a historian or religious expert to come in and make a presentation to the class. Prepare questions that you may ask as part of the discussion.

You may use the following questions as a guide:

- a. What is development?
- b. What is national development?
- c. What are the indicators of national development?
- d. Does religion contribute to national religion?

**Table 5.1 Questionnaire**

1.	
2.	
3.	

## CONTRIBUTION OF AIR TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GHANA

This section will explore some of the contributions of AIR to the development of Ghana.

1. **General education and skill training:** AIR provides informal education, for example through festivals where the history of local areas and rites of passage for socialisation is shared and passed on between communities and generations. It also provides opportunities for skills acquisition and preparation of people for lifelong learning through storytelling and folklores from traditional leaders and elders.
2. **Moral education:** AIR builds and enforces values such as patriotism, respect, honesty, boldness, communalism and empathy through rites of passage, rewards and punishment. Activities such as storytelling, songs, proverbs and wise sayings from traditional leaders and the elderly teach traditional moral value to younger generations.
3. **Conservation of the environment:** Some examples of how AIR promotes environmental conservation in Ghana are listed below;
  - a. AIR provides traditional education on the care and conservation of nature; traditional teachings emphasise living in harmony with nature and respecting



- the land and resources. Alongside the teachings, rituals are performed to honour the land, ancestors, and deities thereby promoting gratitude and stewardship.
- b. The imposition and enforcement of environment taboos. The observance of traditional taboos on overexploitation of resources, protecting endangered species and habitats supports environmental conservation.
  - c. Education on the relationship between humans and the environment; AIR emphasizes the strong bond between human beings and nature. Human beings will cease to exist if the environment is completely destroyed. Therefore, humans must protect and take good care of the environment to ensure sustenance of life. The saying “when the last tree dies the last man dies” illustrates the position of AIR.
  - d. The belief that ancestors are the custodians of the land and natural resources promotes the preservation of land to the yet-unborn; belief in a spiritual bond between humans, nature and ancestors fosters reverence and care for the environment.
4. **Social cohesion and unity:** By embracing AIR Ghanaians cultivate a strong sense of community, social cohesion, and national unity, bridging ethnic and cultural divides. Some examples are listed below;
- a. Festivals bring people together and create a sense of social belonging; through participation in traditional festivals and celebrations social bonds and unity are strengthened. Festivals provide a common experience for people to share, creating a sense of community and togetherness. Festivals also offer opportunities for socialising, building relationships and reinforcing existing ones. Furthermore, festivals often welcome everyone regardless of background, age, or status, promoting a sense of inclusivity and belonging.
  - b. Indigenous conflict management resolution: AIR brings about indigenous conflict management in different ways. For example, the belief in ancestral spirits mediating conflict promotes peaceful resolution. Also, respected traditional leaders and elders facilitate conflict resolution through customary practices.
  - c. Training the younger ones to assume leadership roles by informally learning from the elderly; AIR, through mentorship, cultural immersion, apprenticeship, rites of passage, community service, storytelling, trains the younger members of society to assume roles of responsibility. For example, pairing the youth with experienced elders and leaders for guidance and mentorship is a way of training the youth to assume leadership roles. It is also done by providing hand-on training in traditional skills and leadership responsibility.
5. Indigenous knowledge in traditional medicine and healthcare to ensure healthy living contributes effectively to the development of Ghana. By recognising and supporting indigenous knowledge in traditional medicine and healthcare, nations can promote cultural preservation, healthcare access, sustainability, innovation, community empowerment, cultural tourism, national pride and holistic well-being, contributing to overall national development. For example, the collaboration between traditional and modern healthcare enhances overall health care systems. Traditional medicine and healthcare practices also attract cultural tourism.

### Activity 5.5

Visit a traditional leader or a person knowledgeable in AIR to discuss the contribution of AIR to national development. Share your findings with a colleague or your Religious Studies teacher. Alternatively, your teacher may arrange for an expert such as a traditional leader, to come and present to the class. Prepare questions that you could ask as part of the discussion.

**Table 5.2: Questionnaire**

	Question	Response (write the responses here)
1.	What is the contribution of AIR in promoting peace and security in the country?	
2.		
3.		

### Activity 5.6

Using online or digital sources, watch a documentary on AIR and environmental conservation. Your teacher may provide you with specific recommendations or a brief to look at a particular aspect of conservation.

Make notes of your findings and discuss their relevance to the development of Ghana with a colleague or with your class teacher.

### Activity 5.7a

Prepare notes for a debate on the following motion:

*“AIR has no contribution to make towards the development of Ghana”*

In groups, consider your motion and whether you have been asked to argue for or against it.

What are the key arguments you will want to present to your class to convince them to vote for you? Think about the points that could be made by the team making the opposing argument – how would you address these?

Your teacher will assign you a particular role in the debate, for example, speaker or moderator. Remember the ground rules of debate; listening respectfully without interrupting, keeping to the time given and in rebuttal, only criticise or challenge ideas rather than the individuals making them.

**Activity 5.7b**

Attend a traditional festival or performance of any traditional rites of passage (naming, puberty, marriage, funeral etc.) if you have the opportunity. Consider its relevance to national development and summarise your conclusions in a short report for your class teacher.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GHANA

This section will explore some of the contributions of Christianity to the development of Ghana.

### 1. General education and skills development:

- a. Formal education at all levels; Christianity, through its missionaries, has pioneered elementary, secondary, technical, agricultural and vocational education in Ghana. By the 19th century basic schools in the country were predominantly mission sponsored schools. They equally attached great importance to the provision of secondary education and the first secondary school in the country Mfantsipim was founded by the Wesleyan Mission in 1876. Christian missions also paid attention to technical, industrial or vocational training and set up industrial institutions and workshops to train carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, book-binders etc. Missionary bodies have also played a significant role in teacher education. One of the greatest contribution of Christianity in Ghana is that through their educational activities, they provided Ghana with leaders who came to assume responsibility in our nation building. Political leaders like Dr. Aggrey, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Dr. K. A. Busia and J. B Danquah could all be said to be products of Christian missionary education.
- b. Socialisation of people through church activities; Christianity through its church activities provides moral and character training, a sense of security and belonging and teaches the need for co-operation with others, for example by encouraging them to become members of the various groups and societies in the church. Such groups include Bible study and prayer, Men and Women Followership, Young People's Guild, Knight and Ladies of St. John International, Marshallans among others where there is close interaction among members.

### 2. Moral education:

- a. Schools established by churches impart moral education through the activities of the schools, for example through the inclusion of prayer and worship in school activities, encouraging learners to memorise scriptural verses teaching ethics and values like integrity, forgiveness and kindness, honesty, respect and kindness and providing moral guidance and counseling to learners.

- b. Serving as a ‘moral conscience’ of the country, through sermons and moral teachings. Churches in Ghana serve as moral conscience of the country in their preaching and teaching of biblical principles and moral values, in the provision of commentary on social issues, and advocating for social justice and righteousness, the offering guidance on ethical issues such as corruption, advocating for the rights of the marginalised, poor, and vulnerable as well as through community mobilisation to address social and moral issues.
- c. Occasional contribution to national dialogue. Through their periodic pastoral letters and communiqués they promote national unity and cohesion, facilitate conflict resolution and mediation, advocate for social justice and human rights as well as providing moral guidance on national issues.

### 3. Healthcare provision:

- a. Hospitals and clinics established by various Christian groups: Christianity through its missionary activities has promoted good healthcare delivery through the provision of health services, notably, the building of hospitals and clinics. Notable examples are the Agogo Presbyterian Hospital in the Ashanti Region and the St. Joseph’s Catholic Hospital in the Upper West Region.
- a. Health campaigns: Many of the churches in Ghana in their endeavour to carry the healing ministry of Jesus Christ to hard-to-reach communities periodically organise free health screening, and medical check-ups for congregants and communities. They also run awareness programmes to educate members on various health topics such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and hypertension. They equally incorporate health education in their sermons, Bible studies and Sunday school curricula. By carrying out these health campaigns, churches in Ghana demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their members and the wider community, supporting both the physical and spiritual needs of individuals.

### 4. Provision of social and welfare services:

- a. Christian NGOs providing social and relief services: There are Christian NGOs providing social and relief services in Ghana. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for example, provide job training, food security training, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as psycho-social support. The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provides social and relief services in health, agriculture, water and sanitation, education, child protection. CRS supports healthcare services including HIV/AIDS treatment, maternal and child health and malaria prevention.
- b. Provision of infrastructure: Churches in Ghana have contributed significantly to the provision of infrastructure in various areas. They have established schools, colleges, and universities thereby providing access to quality education. They have also provided hospitals, clinics, and healthcare centres offering medical care and services. Churches have also organised projects to drill bore-holes, construct wells and provide clean water sources for communities.



- c. Scholarships and bursaries for the needy: Churches in Ghana provide scholarships and bursaries for students across the breadth and length of the country. For instance, the Christian Council of Ghana, partnered with Global Ministries to provide scholarships for girls from low-income families to help them attend school. The Methodist Church Ghana offers scholarships to underprivileged students in senior high schools through the “Bishop Blankson’s Methodist Education Fund”.
- d. Counseling and motivation: Churches in Ghana provide counseling, support and motivation for people experiencing challenges such as stress, anxiety and depression. Some churches offer support and guidance on parenting issues, including infertility, parenting responsibility and conflicts between parents and children. Church leaders also offer guidance on marital issues including conflict, trust and finances.

### 5. Conservation of the environment; Churches in Ghana are conserving the environment through various initiatives including;

- a. Planting of trees: some churches in Ghana embark on tree planting exercises to combat deforestation and promote reforestation. For example, the Arbor Week of the Roman Catholic Church, the reforestation programmes by Church of Pentecost and Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church.
- b. Environmental education: churches contribute to the conservation of the environment by teaching congregants about environmental stewardship and sustainability.

#### Activity 5.8

With the help of textbooks, internet and other relevant sources, summarise four contributions of Christianity to the development of Ghana.

#### Activity 5.9

Research examples of social projects led, or undertaken by Christian groups. Compile your examples and share them with your class for discussion.

#### Activity 5.10

Your teacher may arrange for an expert such as a religious leader, teacher or member of the clergy to come in and present to the class on the role of Christianity on national development in Ghana. Prepare questions that you may ask as part of the discussion.

**Table 5.3:** Questionnaire

	Question	Response (write the expert response here)
1	Why should Christianity be interested in socio-economic development of the country?	
2.		
3.		

**Activity 5.11a**

1. Prepare notes for a debate on the following motion:  
*“Christianity has shown more commitment to Ghana’s development than the state.”*
2. In groups, consider your motion and whether you have been asked to argue for or against it.
3. What are the key arguments you will want to present to your class to convince them to vote for you? Think about the points that could be made by the team making the opposing argument – how would you address these?
4. Your teacher will assign you a particular role in the debate, for example, speaker or moderator. Remember the ground rules of debate; listening respectfully without interrupting, keeping to the time given and in rebuttal, only criticize or challenge ideas rather than the individuals making them.

**Activity 5.11b**

Visit local projects or institutions (for example schools, universities, hospitals, water projects) that were established by Christian groups or organisations. Consider how they have supported local and national development and summarise your conclusions in a short report for your class teacher.

**Activity 5.11c**

Assume the position of a Minister of Religious Affairs, and draft a speech highlighting the contribution of Christianity to the development of Ghana and present it to a renounced religious minister in your locality for assessment.

# Review Questions

1. How is religion connected to the development of a country?
2. Justify the contribution of AIR to the development of Ghana.
3. With relevant examples, explain the contributions of Christianity to the development of Ghana.

## Extended Reading

1. Development: Meaning and Concept of Development (sociologydiscussion.com) [https://www.Govtgirlsekbalpur.com/StudyMaterials/geography/SEM4\\_GEOG\\_HONS.\\_CC9\\_TOPIC%206\\_20%of%20Development.pdf](https://www.Govtgirlsekbalpur.com/StudyMaterials/geography/SEM4_GEOG_HONS._CC9_TOPIC%206_20%of%20Development.pdf)
- [First World vs Third World Countries – what’s the Difference ?/ Developing vs Developed Countries. –YouTube](#)
- [Developed and Developing Countries Lessons for kids – Poor vs Rich Countries Lesson For Kids \(youtube.com\)](#)

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## Glossary

### WORDS

### MEANING

<b>Standard of living:</b>	this is the economic or material well-being of a people living in a country. That is, the quality of life led by the people.
<b>Environmental degradation:</b>	the gradual process by which the natural state and quality of the environment deteriorates through the activities of human beings and animals, as well as natural means, to the extent that the natural environmental resources are inadequate to support living organisms.
<b>Environmental conservation:</b>	this is the process of preserving and protecting the quantity and quality of natural environmental resources, so that they may provide the greatest sustainable benefit to the present generation as well as maintaining their potential for future use by future generation.
<b>Economic growth:</b>	this is a sustained increased in a country's national output or per capita income due to an increase in a country's productivity capacity. In other words, it is the percentage increase in the total output of the economy at stable prices in a year.

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