

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM OUTGOING CEO

E. Gyimah-Boadi

There is an old African proverb that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.” The success of Afrobarometer is testament to the truth of that proverb. It has been more than 20 years since I sat down with my colleagues and friends, Professors Mike Bratton and Bob Mattes, to discuss the establishment of Afrobarometer. Our dream was to fill a gap that was glaringly obvious to us: the absence of the voices of ordinary Africans in the policy-making space. As our dream came to life, we gathered additional partners, stakeholders, advocates and supporters, all walking with us as we have travelled the Afrobarometer path - together.

And what a journey it has been! There have been some tough times, of course, but also times of great accomplishment and progress. Our journey has taken us across plains, hills, rivers, lakes, the Sahel, the Savannahs—literally and figuratively. Guiding us along the way has been one vision: to put into action the principle that *African societies thrive when African voices count in public policy and development*. I feel exceedingly privileged to have played a role in the birth of this ambitious experiment.

I must admit I can now better appreciate the pain politicians feel when the time comes to step away from something that has been such a big part of their lives and careers. But step away, we all must, so I will interpret the calls of the people for “four more” as four more hours per day with my granddaughter.

I leave with gratitude. The best part of this journey for me has been the joy of working with an amazing group of exceptionally talented, creative and dynamic - mainly youthful - Afrobarometer team members. (But then at my age, everyone is youthful!) To all my immediate Afrobarometer colleagues, Core Partners, National Partners, Support Unit members, let me say that I cannot thank you enough for your dedication and commitment on this journey, and for making such a success of it all, through the easy times as well as the challenging times. And I will forever

be indebted to the support of the donors, advocates and stakeholders who have walked with us on this path. Your unstinting assistance is sincerely appreciated.

I leave with boundless pride at our accomplishments, across all our activities, but particularly our success in creating an incredibly rich database on the experiences, evaluations, and perspectives of ordinary Africans across a wide range of thematic areas. We have succeeded in getting the views of citizens reflected in Africa policy-making at the national and international levels. And along the way, we have also made a powerful impact on the way Africa is viewed across the continent and the world.

Not least, I leave with full confidence that the institution is transitioning into good hands with its next CEO, Dr. Joseph Asunka. Like Joseph in the Bible, he left his comfort zone as Afrobarometer network-wide data manager to pursue doctoral studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). From there, he took up a position with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in Silicon Valley, California. And now, in the full strength of mid-career, and having built great capacity and forged extensive contacts in the sphere of promoting accountable governance, he is literally coming back home to lift Afrobarometer to greater heights in its 3rd decade and beyond. To have Joe walking with all of us during the next part of our journey is truly a blessing.

The road ahead for Afrobarometer is bright. What started as an inspiration is now an institution, one with a solid foundation for consolidation and future growth. Just as we ourselves preach, it's not about the men or women, it's about building institutions. So, although this man is stepping back, the institution is moving on.

Finally, it is with great joy that I can say I will not be leaving you all completely. Although I am stepping back from management, I have been appointed Chair of the Board of Directors for Afrobarometer. Whether with a formal title or not, Afrobarometer will forever be a part of me, and you can count on me to contribute to its success in whatever way I can.

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