

In Conversation

Samuel Awuku – Director General, Ghana National Lottery Authority

Ghana's National Lottery Authority (NLA) which operates the country's hugely popular lotto, is celebrating its 60th anniversary. DG Awuku (*right*) outlines its path to success.

Aim is to make NLA the biggest lottery on the continent

When and how did lotto come to Ghana?

The decision to set up a lottery institution in Ghana goes back to 1958 when Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was the Prime Minister. The then Finance Minister, Mr. Komla Agbeli Gbedemah chanced upon a lottery during a visit to Malta, and reported it back to the leader.

Subsequently, two Maltese officials were seconded to Ghana to help set up a lottery institution, the Department of National Lotteries, with a mandate to organise raffles for the public to have fun and win prizes. Mr. Francis William Brennan, one of the Maltese officials, was appointed as the first Director-General; the NLA's current Draw Hall, the Brennan Hall is named after him.

According to the 22 August 1958 edition of the *Daily Graphic*, the euphoria that characterised the first draw was so huge that Osagyefo Nkrumah disrupted travel arrangements to attend the event and pressed the button for the first prize of £5,000.

Over the past 60 years, the National Lottery Association (NLA) has evolved from its earlier incarnation as a civil service institution (the Department of National Lotteries) and has been transformed into an autonomous public service institution, with a legal monopoly on the organisation of lotteries in Ghana, and is one of the most important contributors to both government revenues and employment generation.

Currently, in addition to the six Daily Games, the Authority operates the Caritas Lottery Platform, which collaborates with corporate Ghana and well-meaning Ghanaian businesses to conduct raffles, draws and lotteries to promote businesses. Proceeds from the Caritas Lottery Platform are used to fund the charity arm of the Authority, the Good Causes Foundation.

When I took up my post in 2021, I trav-

elled to Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Morocco. The objective was to find out what they are doing differently in their operations, learn from it and deepen bilateral relations with them. The Authority has also played host to the Ivoirians, Nigerians, Tanzanians and a delegation from Niger.

NLA has now been re-accepted as a member of the African Lotteries Association (ALA) and is working on its certification. NLA has also won the bid to host the African Lotteries Association Conference on Responsible Gaming in December this year, which coincides with the Authority's 60th Anniversary Celebration.

The 60th Anniversary Celebration was officially launched on 29 September 2022. The three months of activities will be climaxed with a Grand Durbar on 9 December 2022. The President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, is the Special Guest of Honour. The President of the World Lottery Association (WLA), Rebecca Paul Hargrove, and the General Secretary of WLA, Lynne Roiter, as well as about 15 lottery bodies of the African Lotteries Association, will join NLA to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee.

What are the Authority's key values today?

One of our hallmarks is the Code of Ethics and the Core Values that guide and shape the conduct of our employees. They have been specifically developed to advance the goal of preserving public trust and confidence in the institution and to enable employees to apply NLA's Core Values in the execution of their work.

Our core values are: Respect for People; Excellence in All We Do; Recognising Our Responsibility; Setting Standards in the Lottery Industry; Doing the Right Thing and Doing It Well, and our motto is 'Together We Accomplish More'

This also means treating our customers

and other stakeholders with the utmost respect and delivering on our promise to give them a memorable customer experience.

The integrity of our Games hinges not only on how we project it, but also on how well we carry ourselves as employees of this institution.

How important is the role of NLA in supporting the country's development?

The National Lotto Act mandates the NLA to conduct the National Lotto for the purpose of raising revenue for the nation. The Act also enjoins NLA to provide, care and protect the physically or mentally afflicted, the needy, the aged, orphans and destitute children.

Our mission is "To create moments of hope and happiness through exciting lottery games that generate revenue for national development and make all stakeholders ultimate winners".

NLA is one of the critical revenue-generating agencies of the state. We have played a pivotal role in supporting and partnering government in several aspects of our national development through corporate social responsibility and direct payments into the Consolidated Fund, while making the citizenry rich through exciting lottery games.

Looking to the future, the NLA is seeking to generate additional revenue through our games, to contribute more towards the nation's developmental agenda and as part of our Good Causes, support those in the categories listed above.



'The NLA, an autonomous public institution, is one of the most important contributors to both government revenues and employment generation.'

What have the achievements been in the digitisation process so far?

The government has been heavily driving the digital agenda in virtually all sectors. We believe that with the strong relationship we have with our digital partners, we should be able to fit into the government's agenda of digitalisation to transform our revenue base.

Originally, NLA operated its games offline, i.e. through kiosks and the manual system but the dynamics of the times have propelled us into the digital space. We were fortunate to have a good partner, KGL Technologies Ltd., which has been driving this agenda and for us, an increase in revenue on the online front. Subsequently, we have also been in talks with other companies to bring some dynamism into the digital space.

Going forward, NLA is seeking to modernise its activities with new contracts and new arrangements without deliberately pushing out our old and loyal Lotto Marketing Companies (LMCs). We are currently researching into the digital space to enable us to segment our customer base and tailor products

to their needs vis-à-vis our digital agenda and vision.

Tell us about the Good Causes Foundation.

The objective of the Good Causes Foundation is to develop, implement and maintain a structure and Action Plan based on four main pillars: Education, Health, Youth and Sports Development, and Culture and Arts.

Regarding Education, the focus is to award backing to brilliant but needy students and support educational institutions.

In the area of Health, the Foundation focuses on infrastructure support, the training of mental health workers, providing hospital or medical equipment and supplies, and embarking on nationwide medical outreach work on specific ailments.

Youth and Sports Development covers capacity-building for the youth and supporting sporting activities, with a special focus on the development of lesser-known sports. It also assists SMEs owned by young people with the technical and skills support they may need to be innovative. Special attention is also given to persons with special needs and disabilities who may want to become entrepreneurs.

On Culture and Arts, our final pillar, the Foundation supports projects that seek to safeguard and protect Ghanaian cultural events, the arts, and educational programmes.

Going beyond this, NLA is seeking to collaborate with well-meaning Ghanaians as well as partners beyond our borders to reach out further, to persons who are less privileged.

The regular sources of funding have been the NLA proceeds from the Caritas Lottery Platform, donations from our collaborators, and our Licensed Private Lotto Operators. We are also reaching out to entities that have their own NGOs or Foundations and engage in similar activities. We believe we can form stronger partnerships with them. As John F. Kennedy put it, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

Are there other major objectives for NLA in the medium term?

The major objective is for the NLA to take the stage as the biggest lottery body on the continent, with the biggest revenue base. We also want to champion digitalisation within every space of the industry and for the Authority to be credited with lots of good causes and initiatives across the country.

The vision is to see the NLA rivalling world-class lottery bodies, generating enough revenue to contribute towards

national development and embarking on lots of good causes – having an ‘impact through games’.

Fraudsters who impersonate our staff on WhatsApp and Facebook to solicit for money in exchange for purported winning lotto numbers are a bane and the Authority needs to step up its efforts in fighting them.

Another challenge that bedevils NLA is illegal lottery operators who have dominated the market.

To help curb the situation, I adopted a strategy begun by my predecessor to license all private Lotto operators in a bid to sanitise the lottery industry. NLA, therefore, issued a release in September 2021 for all unlicensed Lotto Operators, interested entities and/or individuals who wish to be registered and subsequently licensed to operate and sell Lotto products, to pick up Pre-Qualification Application Forms from any of NLA’s Regional Offices for completion and submission.

After going through the processes, 16 companies have been duly licensed to operate under the frameworks of the National Lotto Act 2006 (Act 722) and the Veterans Administration (VAG) Act 2012 (Act 844).

PLOs operating the 5/90 Game under

Act 722 were required to pay Ghana Cedis (GH¢) 1.5m while those operating under Act 844 paid GH¢500,000.00. Those operating both paid GH¢2m.

With this in place, NLA’s task force in collaboration with the security services continues to clamp down on defaulters of the law. NLA is working on establishing new branches in parts of the country where it has no presence to rake in revenue and deflate the activities of illegal lottery operators.

Finally, what have been your major achievements as DG in your short administration?

I came in at a time when the Authority was inundated with a myriad of issues ranging from financial, through labour to a sunken image.

Leading an image rebranding of the Authority has been essential. Making the Authority much more attractive to the people, endearing the people to the Authority and drawing them closer to the vulnerable, the less privileged and desolate through our charity arm, the Good Causes Foundation, has ultimately changed the way the Authority is perceived.


I noticed staff were disgruntled about their conditions of service and were in

an endless tussle with management. After several meetings and negotiations with the local union team, we successfully implemented the Public Services Commission Review Report, which set the foundations for Staff Promotions, Staff Development, and Staff Advancement. In effect, hard work is rewarded.

This has rekindled the trust between management and staff, getting them to work better now. Thus, reviving the spirit of cooperation and teamwork among the staff is key for me. Improving upon our work ethic and attitude towards work has also been helpful to the growth of the business.

I met a debt of GH¢14m of outstanding unpaid wins, an issue that made our patrons lose faith in the Authority. As of now, that debt has been completely cleared.

To improve on our sales, we renegotiated a better deal for the NLA to get a greater share of proceeds from our online partner, KGL Technologies Limited, to rake in more revenue for the Authority than had been done in the past.

We have also successfully licensed some Private Lotto Operators that previously operated illegally and paid no dividends to the government, as described above. 



THE GOOD CAUSES FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL LOTTERY AUTHORITY IS FUNDED THROUGH THE CARITAS LOTTERY PLATFORM



VISION To Improve the quality of life of Ghanaians for Generations

To Improve the lives of the vulnerable in our society through sustainable transformative interventions.

MISSION



In Conversation

Alex Dadey – Executive Chairman, KGL Group

KGL Group is a wholly-owned Ghanaian group of companies, with interests in technology innovation, fintech, logistics, trade, property development, gaming and commerce.

For NLA, the tide has turned and a bright future awaits

In just about three years, KGL has become a key player in the Ghanaian economy. What accounts for your success?

I think the history of KGL can be traced from my own history – my journey in the world of entrepreneurship began about 30 years ago. Over that period, I have operated on both sides of the Atlantic and in fact, I still have business operations in the United Kingdom.

When I was permanently based in the UK, working at the highest levels, I dealt with over 25 countries around the world. As someone involved in venture capital, I got to invest and participate in a number of sectors, including textiles, fintech and several others.

We have financed different projects in Ghana, Africa, and other parts of the world. That is the experience that I brought on board in setting up the KGL Group. It is this background, I believe, that accounts for the success that we have had. I was able to bring along partners that I had been dealing with over the three decades to replicate what we have been doing in Europe and globally.

Tell us about your partnership with the government in its digitalisation drive, and your partnership with NLA.

First and foremost, I need to state that I am totally aligned with the vision of the government in digitalising industry and the nation’s economy. It serves a very crucial purpose in our growth as a nation. We are not just partnering with government; we are very active in the tech space and digitalisation, generally.

One of the major success stories is the digitalisation of the national lottery. In most parts of the world, such as in the UK, lottery is a key revenue generator for the government and the economy. This was not the case in Ghana, where the lottery was making losses and we had the National Lottery Authority struggling

to pay its bills. This is because the illegal lottery operators had taken over and were doing about 75% of the lottery business in the country.

We must make the distinction between lottery and gambling. The private sector runs gambling, but the lottery is a preserve of government and under national control.

We realised that we could help address this through digitalisation, so we entered the market and now we are providing huge revenues for the government. We provided most of our operational costs and bore all the risk, at no expense to the institutions that we deal with. The NLA has benefitted

‘We realised we could help the NLA through digitalisation, and now we are providing huge revenues for the government.’



hugely in terms of revenues to the consolidated fund as well as the appropriate revenue authorities.


What has been the impact on the NLA of its partnership with the KGL Group?

The National Lottery Authority, as a regulator, cannot operate alone, but relies on companies like the KGL Group in driving its agenda of revenue mobilisation for the nation through lottery. Due to this partnership, the NLA is in a better position financially, with the Director General, Sammy Awuku, doing a fantastic job in my opinion.


It can pay better, more competitive salaries, the staff are happier and well-motivated, old infrastructure is being revamped and most important of all, we are able to contribute significantly to the government’s consolidated fund. This bodes well for the NLA.

How important is the role of a National Lottery Authority in a developing economy?

The lottery is an important tool in revenue mobilisation for any government. The NLA has performed this function for 60 years. I can definitely say it has been an arduous 60 years with several upheavals. It used to make losses year on year with a lot of disgruntled staff. I can confidently say the tide has turned and a bright future awaits the NLA and KGL Group.

I have huge expectations of the NLA, and I am proud to say, we will continue to play a significant role in the lottery space, hopefully for the next decade or more, not only in Ghana but across the sub-Saharan region. I’d like to say a huge congratulations to the entire NLA family and to wish them a happy 60th birthday. I wish them well in the years to come. 

This section was coordinated by Top Reports – International Communications Agency.



Setting efficiency in motion for growth, progress and greater value

Experience our skill in providing
bespoke solutions that help you grow



www.kglgroup.com.gh
+233 276502070