



# GHANA COALITION OF NGOs IN HEALTH

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **“ADVOCATING FOR COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER, HEALTH SAFETY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY POLICY IN GHANA”**

The Law establishing National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO Act 517, 1996) must be amended to respond to the current crisis the country is undergoing in terms of disaster planning, management, urban growth and human protection mechanism.

Ghana needs a ***Disaster, Health Safety and Psychotherapy Relief Policy.***

We the Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health view that, if this policy is put in place, it will help inform the amendment of the NADMO Act 517. The law is old and not too relevant to the current situation, given the fact that, Ghana’s population was less than 19,000,000(19m) people when it was enacted.

Also, the consultation policy leading to the enactment of the law also restricted Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) and private organisations in providing inputs at the committee levels and thus most of the time NADMO is not making conscious effort to involve CSOs holistically.

#### **The Recent Happenings:**

We have observed for the last 6 months that there has been human rights violations, poor approaches and administration of the disasters support services to victims affected by floods, fires, demolitions and forceful evictions of Ghanaians. As a country, we have not attached seriousness or professional approach to the situations because our laws or policies are not adequately addressing the current human settlement and protection issues.

It was also observed that, some communities, districts and regions have had similar situations but less attention is given in all these situation.

## **Impact of Disaster in Ghana**

Over the past few decades, social actors in Ghana have turned their attention to flood hazard mitigation to reduce losses. For example, after the floods of July 1995, several measures were adopted to mitigate flood hazards. Hague and Burton (2005:341) find that mitigation is “the wide array of actions that can be taken to reduce vulnerability.” It is understood that the success of mitigation activities is determined by the decline of short and long-term risk to people and property. In this sense mitigation goes beyond preparedness to paying attention to the context of vulnerability and how it has evolved in a society.

Despite increasing mitigation efforts human vulnerability to flooding, disasters and demolition continues to increase. More than a decade after a major flood disaster, losses associated with successive floods continue to increase. For example, the floods of July 3, 1995 destroyed major roads, thousands of homes and took 13 lives in Accra but on June 28, 2001, flooding in Accra led to the death of 20 people, the displacement of thousands of households, and the destruction of property worth millions of dollars’ (The Daily Graphic 2001).

Between 1995 and 2007, more than ten incidents of flooding were recorded in Accra that resulted in the loss of human life, displacement of households, infrastructure damage, and disruption of economic activities with each successive flood having a severe impact than the previous one (Government of Ghana 2001; 2003). One would expect that people who have long experiences with flooding would develop methods to mitigate its impacts. Therefore if flood victims continue to suffer heavy losses, then explanations should be pursued.

The flood disasters (product of a natural force with severe consequence on vulnerable human populations and their possessions) of 1995, 2001 and 2007, and the devastating annual floods in Accra indicates that hazards are more than a force of nature. Although flood events can become actual disasters for many reasons, some related to the physical characteristics of the flood (rain intensity, duration, size, etc.). In Accra the vulnerability of human groups that are exposed to the flooding risk is significant. Without a doubt, both the level of risk at Accra (the probability of occurrence of flooding and likelihood of damage) and conditions that contribute to social vulnerability (a wide range of social, economic, and political factors within society) are implicated in the impact of disasters in the metropolis. Unfortunately, increasing flood impact is often attributed to excessive rainfall without a deeper look at the political ecological processes that may amplify or attenuate the impact of floods: **www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-3216 (Paper) ISSN 2225-0948 (Online) Vol 2, No.10, 2012**

With the World Coverage on disaster, there has been a total damage of USD 1.4 trillion, 1.7 billion people affected and 0.7 million total people killed: **EM-DAT database, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)**

Our climate is changing as a result of the enormous pressure we are putting on our planet. The weather is no longer predictable, droughts, flooding, windstorms have become rampant as a result of lack of wind breaks, etc.

Recently the power crisis nicknamed “Dumsor” thing is even making Ghanaians more prone to disasters whether at home, work place and or within the general environment

Over the last few years, Ghana has experienced floods of very great proportions. These floods which can be attributed to Climate Change leaves in its trail destruction of Life, Property and Infrastructure. Several people also get displaced.

Cumulatively, these floods, rainstorms and windstorms caused havoc in about 950 Communities nationwide. Damage and destruction included 20,000 Acres of Farmlands and 14,899 Collapsed Houses. Also a number of Bridges and Roads were washed away, 744 Schools were destroyed and over 228,000 persons affected: 51% of them were children and 26% women. This clearly demonstrates that children and women are the most vulnerable in society when national disasters occur.

In the first quarter of 2012, one thousand nine hundred and forty-two (1942) people have so far been affected by rain storm. Of this, children constitute 61% and women 23% making a total of 84% (women and children alone) of the total affected in 2012.

### **Recommendations**

1. The section of the NADMO Act 517 should be reviewed to include larger body of the national, regional and districts committee, especially CSOs and private interest organizations
2. Section 2 (29-f) should be enforced adequately to include psychotherapeutic interventions to manage mental health issues and traumatic conditions as a result of poor planning and collaboration
3. Section 7 of the Act 517 should redefine the roles of committees and in our current situation
4. We also recommend Government to come out with clear guidelines on how disaster relief funds should be co-ordinated. The current arrangements are not managed in both public and private sectors with focus on accountability and equitable distribution.
5. There must be a renewed collaboration with CSOs as part of measures for early warning.

## **Conclusion**

There is a death toll rise Torrential rains wreaked havoc on Accra and the death toll from the resultant flood and fire disasters has been put at 152. The June 3 disaster in Accra is the worst in the county's history and it exposed the deficiencies in the planning and development of our cities.

We therefore call on Government especially the select committees on environment, disaster and relief to initiative an urgent review of the NADMO ACT 517.

## **BRIEF PROFILE OF GCNH**

The Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health (GCNH) is a reputable not-for-profit Civil Society Organisation (CSO) established in 2000 as an umbrella and coordinating body of activities of all registered NGOs/CBOs in the health sector in the country. GCNH currently has a membership of over 417 registered local civil society organizations with regional branches and offices in all the 10 regions of Ghana. We are legally registered with number: G-18,251(Re-newed in February, 2015) and Social welfare certificate number: DSW/5379.

**Our Mission** is “to provide public health and safety interventions across the nation through evidence based advocacy, empowerment of members, innovative programming, organizational development and behavior change communication”.

**Our Vision** is “A nation free of disease and ill-health”

## **Signed**



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