



GHANA COALITION OF NGOs

IN HEALTH

AGM FORUM 2009

SPEECH BY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COALITION

Dr. CECILIA BENTSI

AGM 2009

Address Speech by the Coalition Board Chairperson

Dr. Cecilia Bentsi

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, members of the Coalition of NGOs in Health, and on my own behalf, I want to thank the Western Regional executives and their members for accepting to host this AGM at a rather short notice. Your chairman did not hesitate in accepting to host us because of the good relationship you have with the Regional Health directorate and the District Assemblies. She was sure you would have all the support needed from the regional authorities. We are most grateful to you, Nana, Hon. Regional Minister, Regional Director of Health services and all our invited guests our development partners and collaborators, especially those who travelled all the way here from Accra, for accepting our invitation at such short notice. It shows that you have the under-privileged that CSOs/NGOs service. May God richly bless you?

I also appreciate Northern Region's frankness in letting us know that although they accepted at the last AGM to host the current one, it will not be possible for them to do so.

This is our first AGM or a National meeting of the Coalition outside Accra. Since it was formed in 2000, NGOs in health came together to achieve synergy; to share their strengths, deal with their weakness through capacity building and experience sharing, to avoid duplication and maximize their efforts and, to enhance collaboration/partnership with the government to improve the status of the communities they serve.

CSOs/NGOs are part of private sector agencies that implement health sector policies. But CSOs/NGOs are in a unique position of also stimulating government and other implementing agencies into making policies and implementing programmes that would benefit the society most and promote equity. This watchdog role is not only for improvement in access to quality health services, but also for efficiency in allocation and utilization of resources. This is so important that some countries, even in Africa, fund CSOs activities and structures.

We hope this shall be said of Ghana sooner than later. For currently, the Coalition operates from a rented accommodation and the tenancy ends next year with the end of our support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

My members are committed to playing the advocacy role to ensure that people's rights to health are not violated and that their health is optimized wherever they may reside, and whatever their status. The Coalition, with its networks and members shall continue to look for gaps in services by identifying the vulnerable and those unreached through the mainstream service.

To play its role in policy development, implementation and monitoring advocacy and as watchdog effectively, the Coalition's members need to be well informed and trained. Communities' capacity also needs to be built to demand accountability, quality services and to make right choices that would promote their health. The Coalition therefore used most of the first semester in building the capacity of its members in various issues. There was also institutional capacity building. Now the Coalition has its ten regional officers established and equipped to enhance work and reporting. We hope that the Coalition shall have district officers in due course to make collaboration with District health administration and the District Assemblies easier. As our theme implies we want government to work more closely with CSOs/NGOs. At this point, we want to show our appreciation to the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, all other collaborators and our funding agencies. We don't know what we would have done without them, especially the Royal Netherlands Embassy, UNAIDS, WHO, GAC, CCM of Global Fund, GAVI.

We thank you all and may God bless us all. Oh, and extend this appreciation to the numerous agencies who have supported our members individual organizations (NGOs/CSOs and CBOs).

We hope that gradually our co-operate bodies in Ghana will fund NGO activities, example for health promotion, under their co-operate responsibility plans.

Thank you.