



**GHANA COALITION OF NGOs**  

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**IN HEALTH**

*Report for Press Conference –  
Communiqué of 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil Society Health  
Forum 2009*

## **Report of the Civil Society Health Forum 2009 - Press Conference Communiqué**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Civil Society Health Forum is a platform where the Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health comes together with other Civil Society Networks to deliberate on identified health issues, assess them in the light of public policy and budgeting and strategise on addressing these issues to achieve improved health status for the citizenry.

This year's theme was: Reaching the Unreached, the Role of Civil Society.

Some of the health issues deliberated upon included the National Health Insurance Scheme, Mental Health, HIV/AIDS, Maternal and Neonatal health, traditional health practice, Nutrition, Health Law, regulation and ethics and so on.

Out of this forum, we hope to make recommendations to inform the preparation of the 2010 MOH Program of Work.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this meeting is to disseminate to the public, the contents of a communiqué arrived at our 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil Society Health Forum about a month ago. It was an event co-sponsored by the Royal Netherlands Embassy, World Health Organisation and UNFPA.

### **3.0 OUTCOME**

Some of the members of the planning Committee of the Civil Society Health Forum were the panelists and they were in the persons of:

Mr. Oscar Bruce -Vice President, Coalition of NGOs in Tobacco Control

Mrs. Becklyn Ulzen Christian - Vice President, Coalition of NGOs in Malaria

Mr. Isaac Tuggun - Administrator, Ghana Federation of the Disabled

Mr. Chief Obiefuna Austin - National Co-ordinator, Stop TB Partnership

Mrs. Cecilia Lodonu-Senoo - President, SWAA Ghana

Mr. Solomon Onubuogu- Vice President, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health

The content of the 15 point communiqué was read by Mr Oscar Bruce whereupon the floor was open for questions. The press represented were Metro TV, TV 3, GNA, Graphic, Times and a few other stations.



#### **4.0 EMERGING ISSUES**

Some of the pertinent questions asked included:

- What some of the issues that generate mistrust between Civil Society Organisations and state institutions.
- The communiqué from last year had similar contents, what has Civil Society done to push their agenda forward and project the Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health?
- Concerning decision point 11, why is there a need for consumer representation on the NHIC?
- What are some of the challenges and achievements of Civil Society thus far?

Some of the responses given were as follows:

- To the issue of mistrust, reference was made to the notion that some NGOs do not apply monies received for the right intent; and this justifies the presence of the Coalition as an umbrella body to build the capacity of member NGOs to be accountable and transparent.

The other side of the coin is that some public health officials also feel threatened by the presence of NGOs, thinking that in doing the same things, they are there to take their jobs or to uncover some negative information about them.

- Engagements with the government through Partners meetings are still ongoing, and the Coalition collaborates with other networks (ie Alliance for reproductive Health Rights )to bring out issues obtained from research conducted. Examples was cited of research which revealed the inadequate supply of contraceptives.
- Currently, there are 2 scheme operators on the NHIC who are supposed to be representing the consumer, however, there is a need for a consumer representative to represent card holders and speak the mind of the consumer.
- The main challenges CSOs face include:

The fact that some public health authorities view CSOs as threats and are therefore reluctant to work with them, and fail to give CSOs the necessary support and recognition.

Additionally, sometimes there are conflicting viewpoints from government and CSOs in that government may project issues in a certain manner in order to score political points; whereas CSOs by virtue of their presence on the ground project it in another light.

The final challenge enumerated was funding for activities for CSOs.

Achievements of CSOS are many. They include the fact that they can be found at grassroot level providing essential information and services to areas where the public health facilities cannot reach. They are mostly collaborating with District Health Management Teams and Regional Co-ordinating Council. Additionally, the education they give helps beneficiaries prevent sicknesses which in turn reduces the cost of treatment. Awareness creation they do is most effective, for instance HIV/AIDS awareness stands at 95%. Indeed, in disease-specific areas, most funding is given to CSOs to implement because they are better able to reach the Most-At-Risk population. CSOs have effectively played the watch dog role by policing government policy on the ground and giving feedback on ways to right the wrongs. Example was cited of anti rabies drugs which were to be administered free of charge but were being sold, until Civil Society drew attention to the situation.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The media were thanked for their presence and encouraged to partner actively with Civil Society in order to bring out identified gaps in health care delivery and help CSOs in their advocacy agenda.