

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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PRESS RELEASE

CSOs Urge Government to Resource NCCE to Embark on Public Education on COVID-19

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana in March, the government has rolled out a number of key measures to help contain the pandemic. These have included the enactment of the Imposition of Restrictions Act (Act 1012), the imposition of a partial lockdown, closure of the country's borders, and a ban on public gatherings.

Members of the public have also been urged to observe a number of safety protocols. These include social distancing, frequent washing of hands, wearing of facial masks, among others, all of which are intended to contain the spread of the disease and ultimately bring it under control.

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has also been associated with the major problem of proliferation of fake news and misinformation. Indeed, in one of his addresses to the nation, H.E. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, flagged it as a major challenge in the on-going effort to contain and deal with the pandemic.

A key prerequisite for the success of the measures announced by government and for public adherence to appropriate protocols for containing the COVID-19 pandemic is public education. Given the above, we, the undersigned Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), have been monitoring the role of public institutions with critical mandates for public education and sensitisation on the pandemic in Ghana. One of such critical institutions is the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).

Last week, we observed with concern, information through a television interview and an official tweet by the NCCE to the effect that due to resource constraints, the Commission could only disburse a paltry one hundred cedis (GHc100) to each of its district offices for public education on COVID-19. Alarmed by the information, we undertook independent checks to ascertain the financial and logistical state of the NCCE.

Our checks revealed a worrying pattern of neglect of the Commission by successive governments since 2009. The neglect and resource-deprivation of the Commission has literally rendered it incapable of undertaking its important constitutional obligation of public education. Among other worrying revelations, our checks revealed the following:

- Despite its critical role in public education, the NCCE has not been involved in national COVID-19 planning and response process

- As at April this year, the Commission had not received any amount from its 2020 budgetary allocation. The Commission has hardly received its total budgetary allocation since 2009.
- The Commission lacks basic tools and equipment such as public address systems, for effective advocacy and public education
- The commission relies on rickety cars that hardly enable mobility. The newest cars are eight years old. In fact, even the Chairman of the Commission does not have an official car since her appointment in 2015.
- The total staff of the Commission in 2007 is less than its current staff in 2020, although the population of the country has increased since then with more regions and districts.
- The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on our nation could be devastating. Appropriate citizen behavior is the most potent arsenal in this fight against COVID-19. Members of the public need to adhere to the necessary safety protocols, as well as other policies and measures announced by government.
- The measures announced by the government so far require effective, persistent education in order to elicit compliance from citizens. There is no public institution better placed to do such public education than the NCCE. The NCCE is mandated by Chapter 19 of our Constitution to inculcate in the Ghanaian citizenry, the awareness of their rights and obligations, through civic education. The NCCE is specialized in citizen education and has the structures to carry out the task; being present in all districts in Ghana. What the Commission needs are the funds, personnel, tools and equipment to deliver.
- While we applaud the efforts and measures implemented by government so far to tackle the pandemic, we are asking the government to, as a matter of urgency, retool the NCCE with the necessary funds and logistics to enable it play the critical role of national public education on COVID-19. We are also appealing to the government to prioritize the role of the Commission by providing it with the required resources to enable it discharge its obligations beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

God save our homeland Ghana!!

Signed:

1. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)
2. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
3. SEND-Ghana
4. Penplusbytes
5. West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)
6. IMANI
7. Citizens Movement Against Corruption (CMaC)
8. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
9. Africa Centre for International Law and Accountability (ACILA)
10. International Child Development Program (ICDP)
11. Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC)
12. CDD-Ghana

13. Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)
14. Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP)
15. Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG)
16. Ghana CSOs Platform on SDGs
17. Pamoja Ghana
18. Offinso Partners in Sustainable Development (OPSD)
19. Krobo Danish Association (KROBODAN)
20. Renel Ghana Foundation (RGF)
21. ABAK Foundation
22. Vision for Alternative Development (VALD)
23. Centre for Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (CEESD)
24. Global Media Foundation (GLOMEF)
25. Elizka Relief Foundation
26. Good Governance Africa (GGA)
27. Young Achievers Caucus (YAC)
28. Edu - Media Ghana
29. Ahafo Network of NGOs (ANN)
30. Indigenous Women Empowerment Network (IWEN)
31. Northern Development Society (NORDESO)
32. Centre for Adolescents and Women's Health Initiative (CAWHI), Ghana
33. Centre for Capacity Improvement for the Well-being of the Vulnerable (CIWED)
34. Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC)
35. Alliance for African Women Initiative (AFAWI)
36. Norules Ghana Foundation
37. Alliance for Empowering Rural Communities (AERC Ghana)
38. Muslim Family Counselling Services
39. Mind Freedom Ghana
40. Centre for Community Livelihood Development (CCLD)
41. Youth Advocates Ghana (YAG)
42. Act for Change (AfC)
43. Young Visionary Leaders Ghana (YVLG)
44. Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)
45. Agorvie Youth for Sustainable Development (AY4SD)
46. Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN)
47. PACKS Africa
48. Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD-Ghana)
49. AbibiNsroma Foundation
50. Abibiman Foundation
51. Capacity Enhancement and Community Support-CAPECS
52. Ghana Youth Environmental Movement
53. Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana (YHFG)
54. PROMAG Network
55. Lens of Hope Foundation
56. LAMA Consult Foundation
57. RU-Care Foundation
58. ICARE
59. Rights and Responsibilities Initiatives Ghana
60. Centre for Community Livelihood Development (CCLD)