

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, HON. SAMUEL OFOSU-AMPOFO DURING THE LAUNCH OF NATIONAL WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (BCC) STRATEGY AT THE COCONUT GROOVE REGENCY HOTEL, ACCRA ON 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011.**

**Madam Chairman, Professor (Mrs) Esi Awuah,**

**Country Director, CHF Ghana,**

**Invited Guests,**

**The Media,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am happy and privileged to be part of this very important event, the launch of the water, sanitation and Hygiene Behavior Change Communication (BCC) Strategy for the urban sub sector. There is no doubt that poor attitudes and behavior continue to be the major challenge confronting the effective delivery of sanitation and hygiene services in the country.

It is therefore very refreshing to have a strategy that seeks to address this problem especially with the urban poor. It is my hope and prayer that the launch of the document will be the end of the story like others but we all together will mobilize the required investments for the implementation of the strategic actions and activities.

Madam Chairman, as a country our performance in terms of sanitation indicators has not been good and therefore requires that we do something dramatic to reverse the poor sanitation conditions we find ourselves in.

Data available indicates that only 18% of the urban population has access to improved latrines. Nearly 50% use shared latrines whilst the rest of the population uses other unsafe sanitation facilities and 7% reportedly practice open defecation with their attendant public health consequences. Primary schoolchildren both in rural and urban areas had to study at schools without a latrine and water supply.

These statistics are staggering and its implication to our health status is tremendous. Diarrhoea kills more children than HIV/AIDS and Malaria combine. Diarrhoea is estimated to account for 25% of all child deaths.

Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, a simple act of washing hands with soap has the potential to reduce up to 40% of diarrhoea prevalence rate. Hand washing with soap before eating, after using a latrine, and after touching a baby's stool, are some critical times that could effectively prevent diarrhoea. Yet, these simple practices are not observed.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, behaviour change communication is a cost effective tool that creates demand for improved sanitation and hygienic practices which can effectively fight diarrhoea and improve health and quality of life. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development have put in place the required frameworks to ensure effective and sustainable management of waste in the country and hence wish to state that the stage is ready for action the development of the BCC re - emphasizes this point. The strategy document to be launched today is therefore not only timely but also appropriate and in line with the national policies and strategies since Information, Education and Communication has been prioritize in the revised Environmental Sanitation.

Madam Chairman, the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen, as a country we need to make progress at a faster rate in redressing the mind set of our citizens in the way they respond to the environment and their personal hygiene. It is unacceptable to see people who should know better not to take their personal upkeep that serious. We can dump refuse carelessly with the expectation that our city authorities will attend to them. As a people we should move

away from these, we will need to enforce our byelaws if that will be a way out of the current situation we find ourselves.

As a nation we are not only in infrastructure deficit but behavior as well. We need to fix our roads but even more so we need to use them well. We need to put pedestrian walkways in place, even more so, we should stop squatting on them; we need to provide drains, even more so, we need to keep them clean. All these need change of mind set of the people who are supposed to benefit from such facilities.

Madam Chairman, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we expect our Civil Society partners, the press and other stakeholders to take a bit of this Strategy and implement it for the benefit of our people. I encourage them to take this opportunity to give us the benefit of their knowledge, expertise and vision as we shape the future of Ghana.

Madam Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me acknowledge the immense contributions of CHF International for the wonderful work they are doing especially in the urban sanitation sub sector which poses a major challenge to the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies who have

the responsibility for sanitation in this country. The situation is more serious in the high density low income areas of our cities and towns.

I must say that CHF International has been able to make tremendous impact on the lives of many residents of the urban poor through the extension of water, sanitation and hygiene services thereby improving on their health and quality of life. The Ministry will request that you share your experiences and lessons with the MMDAs on how you have been able to successfully that.

Let me also acknowledge the wonderful contributions of the Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate of the Ministry of Local Government for their facilitation role in getting us here today to do the launch. I wish to also appreciate the effort of the Water Directorate of the Ministry of Water Resource Works and Housing and the Coordinator - Mr. Patrick Apoya, for putting together the document.

Madam Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure and singular honour at this juncture to declare the National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Strategy duly launched. May the Almighty God Richly Bless you all.

Thank you for your attention