

One Year into the Establishment of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources – The prospects and challenges

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It is often said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with only one step. The above adage one can conveniently argue gave birth to the establishment of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources by the President His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo in February 2017 to give meaning to our collective effort as Ghanaian to rid our country of filth. The establishment of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources to many Ghanaians was not surprising looking at the level of sanitation situation in the country which demanded the establishment of a dedicated Ministry to address the situation. Indeed the extent of environmental pollution, land degradation, filth and other related sanitation challenges affecting the quality of our water bodies and the health of the citizenry could almost be described as a threat to national security. Per Executive Instrument 28 establishing the Ministry the general mandate of the Ministry include the formulation of policies for the sustainable development of the sanitation and water sub sectors for accelerated national development in particular and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in general.

Specifically the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources is to formulate comprehensive national policy programs in the area of sanitation and water sub sectors for effective

performance and delivery to the good people of Ghana.

Almost one year down the line since its establishment, it is important to take a step back and see how far the Ministry has gone, its prospects and challenges and the way forward. It must however be acknowledged that as a new Ministry still in the process of establishing the various structures to enhance its delivery one year is too short a period to have a comprehensive analysis of its performance.

Undoubtedly however, one of the high points of the Ministry was the launch of the National Sanitation Campaign in November 2017 which was launched by His Excellency the President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo.

The launch of the National Sanitation Campaign was to restate the ideals of the national Sanitation day observed on the first Saturday of each month and to emphasize the fact that sanitation is an everyday issue. It was also a direct response to the declaration of the President to make Accra the neatest and cleanest city in Africa by the year 2020 as co-chair of the Sustainable Development Goal. It is important to state that the Ministry is steadfastly implementing the directives of His Excellency announced during lunch. These include the establishment of the National Sanitation Authority, the National Sanitation Fund, the National Sanitation Brigade and the establishment of the sanitation marshals among others. The one house, one toilet project is also vigorously being pursued by the Ministry through the Greater Accra Metropolitan Assembly (GAMA) project in collaboration with the District Assemblies. The Ministry has also successfully evacuated the refuse at the dumpsite at Mallam paving the way for the effective use of the land for the benefit of the community. Evacuations of refuse at other dumpsites have also reached various levels of completion: One other merit of the Ministry is the level of international goodwill the Ministry has enjoyed especially from bilateral and multi lateral financial institutions which has resulted into the granting of credit

facilities for the implementation of projects in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector. The granting of these facilities would enable the government through the MSWR to expand existing facilities and also take on new projects. Another notable programme of the Ministry is the Comprehensive Integrated Urban Environment Sanitation Master Plan which is being put together by all stakeholders in the WASH Sector. The document being the first of its kind aimed at harmonizing all existing strategies in the sanitation, drainage and waste management sub- sectors to holistically tackle the sanitation and waste management challenges confronting the national capital.

All the intervention programmes being pursued by the Ministry are in pursuant to the attainment of the sustainable development goal target six. There is no doubt that within the past one year, the Ministry has also gone through its fair share of challenges. Issues of institutional re-alignment, office accommodation, logistics, are but a few of the challenges. There is also no doubt about the fact that the sanitation situation in some of our towns and cities is not the best. But it is equally wrong to blame the Ministry and assume it is doing nothing to turn things round to achieve the best result. The fact is it is our individual and collective action and inaction with regards to refuse disposal and waste management that has created the unfortunate situation in which we find ourselves. If just for a period of only one month or even less we desist from open defecation, throwing rubbish about indiscriminately and dispose of our rubbish appropriately, change our attitude and behaviours towards the environment, we would have the neatest and cleanest environment we can dream of. Our yearly expenditure of \$ 290 million on sanitation related issues would be channeled to more productive use to enhance our living standard and improve upon our well being.

It is time we collectively embrace the One House, One Toilet

concept under the GAMA project to ensure that every household has its toilet facility ,, the panacea to end open defecation.

Under the project, an estimated number of 19,500 households' toilets will be constructed in the various communities. It is re- assuming to note that the project which was recently launched at Ga South Municipality is getting on well with the people. The launch of the National Sanitation Campaign is to enable the country gain its rightful status globally as one of the neatest cities in Africa and beyond. The Ministry will always be steadfast in the formulation of policies to enhance the delivery of water, sanitation and hygiene services to Ghanaians and also coordinate activities in the water and environmental sectors to ensure efficiency and productive use of resources. It is the expectation of the Ministry that all relevant stakeholders especially the media will continue to support the Ministry to deliver on its mandates.

It is refreshing to note that the promise of the President His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo to inject an amount of Two Hundred million Ghana cedis to the sanitation sector during his presentation of the State of Nation's Address is very commendable.

As the theme of the National Sanitation Campaign suggests, clean Ghana, play your parts, it is incumbent on all of us to lead the crusade to get the country clean, to give meaning to the fact that cleanliness is next to Godliness.