

TACKLING GHANA'S PERENNIAL FLOODING

Every year, as the rains come in, Accra and many other cities across Ghana experience devastating floods. Lives are lost, properties destroyed, and families displaced. The sad part is, this story is not new. It has become a yearly recurring disaster, and it's even more worrying, especially when preventive solutions are still inconclusive.

This unfortunate trend mirrors the well-known Akan proverb of the vulture. 'The vulture always promises to build a shelter when the rainy season ends, but once the clouds clear, it forgets its promise and returns to its usual routine - until the next downpour.' As a nation, we have adopted the same attitude. We lament, highlight news reports on flooding and the affected victims and vow to act only when disaster strikes, but when the skies clear, we forget our oaths.

The causes of flooding in Ghana are well known:

- 1) Construction of buildings and shops in waterways.
- 2) Improper and illegal waste disposal, which chokes our gutters and drains.
- 3) Overpopulation and overcrowding in urban areas like Accra.
- 4) Poor urban planning and lack of enforcement of building regulations.
- 5) Lands are being sold and developed without approval from district assemblies or city planning authorities, among others.

The causes of flooding are not mysteries, rather, they are man-made problems that require human solutions and the political will. We must not continue to sacrifice community safety on the altar of individual greed and irresponsibility. It is time for all of us, government (executive, legislature, and judiciary), traditional leaders, civil society organizations, political parties, the media and well-meaning citizens, to take action and put an end to this national shame.

1. We must enforce our laws strictly. Illegal structures in waterways must be demolished without fear or favour, no matter who owns them.
2. Waste management laws must be applied to everyone.
3. Lands must not be demarcated or sold without approval.
4. Urban expansion must follow clear and sustainable guidelines.
5. Expeditious trial of sanitation and environmental-related matters to send an unequivocal message to every Ghanaian to be law-abiding.

6. We must also educate ourselves and our communities. Civic education should not only be in the classroom but also in our daily lives.
7. We all have a responsibility to protect our environment and safeguard it. No one is above the law, and everyone has a part to play.

In conclusion, let us be proactive as a country and not just wait for the next rainy season to start proffering solutions to the old age problems. Let us act now. Let us stop behaving like the proverbial vulture. The time to act is now, and we must act together, decisively, and with commitment. Ghana belongs to all of us, and it's the only country we have. Let's build and protect it.

May God bless our homeland, Ghana, and make her great and strong!

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