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For Immediate Release

The Increasing Incidents of Indiscipline in Our Senior High Schools: A Cause for Concern

The Senior High School (SHS) level is one of the most exciting stages in a young person's educational journey. It is the stage where students are so energetic and full of themselves and would like to explore most of the things that come their way. Some of them at times naively go the extra mile to do what is contrary to rules of the schools and what is socially unacceptable. This behaviour among some students is undermining the quality of education and posing significant challenges to teachers, parents and policy makers.

While the issue of indiscipline is not new in Ghanaian SHSs, its apparent intensification calls for urgent attention and effective strategies to curb same. In recent months, a wide range of behaviours that deviate from established norms and disrupt the academic and social environment have been recorded in our SHSs, manifested in the form of physical violence, bullying, sexual misconduct, truancy, exiting campuses without exeat etc.

In the second week of February, 2025, there was in circulation a social media video of students of the Zuarangu Senior High School, where junior male students were forced by their seniors to simulate sex with their female junior counterparts, while the "so-called" senior students were holding belts and flogging those they claimed were not acting well, all in the name of "ninos" night celebration. How on earth could students in our senior high schools deteriorate into porn artists? The question is who videos these barbaric acts as students are not allowed to send phones to school? Clearly, this notwithstanding, they still find ways of sending phones to school and video their own nasty acts and circulated same.

Before the Zuarangu SHS incident, there was another video of students from the Accra Academy Senior High School where a student was seen flogging some junior students with a machete. Also, in the Sawla Senior High School, about 30 students were suspended on grounds of indiscipline. In September, 2024, a student of the O'Relly Senior High School stabbed his colleague leading to his untimely death. Several unimaginable incidents are being recorded in our Senior High Schools. The public is only privy to what is recorded and leaked on social media. What about the unrecorded, unreported and hidden acts?

Taking our children to SHS, especially boarding school in recent times has become a source of great worry to parents and guardians because of the unruly, inhumane and unimaginable acts being exhibited by our younger ones.

The school environment has become more unsafe than before. A number of criminal acts ranging from cruelty to murder are being committed by our students, immorality and indecency, substance abuse and lawlessness are becoming common acts in our SHSs.

What has changed? People who went to Senior High School in the 90s can testify that though we witnessed some form of bullying and students breaking the rules of the schools, the situation is way different today. Could the reason be the withdrawal of corporal punishment in our schools? Or increasing advancement of technology exposing our students to illicit content and easy transmission of information? Or lack of parental control?

The consequences of the indiscipline in our Senior High Schools include but not limited to the following:

1. Disruption of lessons, creating an environment that is not conducive for learning. Students who engage in disruptive behaviour or who are affected by the behaviour of others often fail to concentrate, leading to poor academic outcomes.
2. Physical injuries but also emotional trauma. Students who experience bullying or violence may develop mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
3. It affects the general school atmosphere, creating a culture of fear and insecurity. Teachers, who should be focused on delivering quality education, often find themselves dealing with disciplinary issues rather than teaching. In extreme cases, some teachers even feel unsafe in their work environment, leading to a decline in the quality of education provided.
4. Students who engage in misconduct are more likely to continue these behaviours into adulthood, contributing to the growth of societal vices such as crime, substance abuse, and disrespect for authority.

If unchecked, indiscipline could have long-term effects on society. It is about time the topic of discipline in our schools be brought up for discussion by all key stakeholders. In as much as we respect the rights of our children, we must understand that to every right, there is a limit.

We cannot sit aloof, all in the name of human rights for our younger generation to be marred with immorality, substance abuse, violence, vandalism and the likes. In our African heritage, discipline is part of our make-up and we cannot give our children too much freedom which in the end will destroy our values and culture. We must distinguish discipline from human rights and love.

We need sanity in our senior high schools, we need responsible people to manage the affairs of this country, we need a safe school environment, and we need a serene society. We send our children to school because we want them to become responsible people in society and to contribute to national development; and not to contribute to a chaotic society in the future.

We therefore call on the Ghana Education Service to consider a broad-based stakeholder engagement to come out with holistic measures and solutions to end this canker that is springing up so fast in our senior high schools.

While waiting for holistic measures to curb the indiscipline in our SHSs, Headmasters and the appropriate school authorities must take rapid steps in restoring discipline in our schools by periodically educating students on the schools regulations and code of conduct for students vis-a-vis the repercussions when breached. The counselling departments of the various SHSs must be strengthened to function aptly.

We strongly recommend that the on-going National Education consultative fora prioritize issues of discipline and a review of the current code of conduct for students in SHSs.

We also call on parents and guardians to make time to instil proper values and morals in their children and not to suppress discipline as a sign of love for their children.

If swift actions are not taken to address the indiscipline in our senior high schools, these young ones will progress with these terrible acts into tertiary institutions and come out to flood our institutions and society with same acts. In the end, the Ghana we are all longing for, will be a nightmare.

The indiscipline in our senior high schools must stop now !!!

Issued by the Northern Network for Education Development (NNED) and its partner organization, DiCare Foundation.

The NNED is a Civil Society advocacy Education Network with over 89 members operating across the five regions of Northern Ghana. NNED since 2002, has been advocating for quality and accessible basic education for all children in the Northern part of Ghana through research and policy engagement at all levels.

DiCare Foundation is a non-governmental organization with a pivotal focus on helping the poor and marginalized in society. The foundation's programmes include sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable groups, career guidance/counselling and vocational training for young people, evangelism and philanthropy, research and policy advocacy in education, health and gender.

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