

“STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs).”

The author of this topic claim that in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals’ targets by 2030, there is the need to strengthen environmental health system of each community around the world. Let analyze and evaluate the topic painstakingly to ascertain whether the author is right. My ideas are presented chronologically as follows: conclusion made by NASA after conducting many researches on planets within the solar system and beyond; the environment and adverse impact on human health, agriculture when its healthy state is degraded; the origin and reasons for the implementation of SDGs; progress made by Ghana; challenges facing the implementation of SDGs in Ghana; the need to promote environmental health the most among the three dimensions of sustainable development; the need for environmental health workers/officers and other environment protecting agencies to achieve the SDGs targets by 2030; points to consider in order to strengthen the environmental health system to maximize the achievements of SDGs by the expiry year.

Human beings have no other planet suitable enough to sustain life aside our “mother Earth.” In a galaxy that likely holds trillions of planets, ours is so far the only known life-bearing. The aftermaths of over three decades of a number of space researches by NASA in search for whether any other planet within the solar system or beyond can equally sustain life. All their effort still proof that the earth is the only planet capable of sustaining life. Consequently, the need to promote environmental stewardship of our beloved planet, Earth, in order to realize a better environment and the world as a whole for the future posterity. This calls for moral obligation by all, both young and old, to make conscious effort to protect and restore some of the adulterated components of the environment, which has become a crucial priority since the late nineteenth century to the 21st century.

Our environment is everything that surrounds us. It includes all the external influences and conditions that can affect our health, life and growth. These external influences are constantly changing and their adverse impact on human health and the climate are imperceptible. Human beings and wildlife depend on indispensable elements – air, water, soil and vegetation – of the environment. The environment is capable of providing the resources needed for use and survival by humans, and equally capable of recycling, removing or neutralizing waste generated and released into it. The geometric rate of increasing human population is directly proportional to the burden on the elements of the environment to meet the demands of the population. Human beings carry out socioeconomic activities such as timber harvesting, agriculture activities, construction and housing, industrialization, urbanization, transportation, land use, establishing companies in order to meet their living demands and survival. These activities are termed anthropogenic activities. Population growth result in increase anthropogenic impact that leads to increase waste generation at a rate beyond the quantity that can be absorbed or neutralized by the environment. Anthropogenic impact is the adverse effect of human activities on the environment (Kennish,2016).

The explosion of human population and increasing industrialization, urbanization, agricultural activities together with other anthropogenic activities has become a major concern for the welfare of humanity. Anthropogenic activities result to the release of those factors into the environment that have adverse health effects on humans. These factors may exist as chemical, biological, or physical agents in air, water, soil or food, and can be transported to humans through inhalation, ingestion, or skin absorption. Environmental degradation is seen to be the major threat facing humanity in the later part of 19th century and the 21st century. The degradations include deforestation, desertification, pollution, and climate change, all of which are issues of critical attention by the international community. These increases the vulnerability of many societies and contribute to scarcity of resources. The alarming consequences of environmental degradation and its adverse effects on human health globally requires immediate attention and interventions, which the United Nations quickly responded by integrating environmental health into the approved implemented Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000 to mitigate the problems arising from anthropogenic impact associated with overpopulation and overcrowding burden on the environment. The MDGs is a set of eight measurable goals that aim at halving extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, reducing child and maternal mortality, promote environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic and sociopolitical of a community. The United Nations (UN) realized a substantial progress in the implementation of the MDGs at the end of its life span, the year 2015. This is evident from the statistics projected by World Health Organization (WHO) on their official website as shown below:

“ Globally, the number of death of children under five years of age fell from 12.7 million 1990 to 6.3 million in 2013; In developing countries, the percentage of underweight children under five years old dropped from 28% in 1990 to 17% in 2013; Globally, new HIV infections declined by 38% between 2001 and 2013; Existing cases of tuberculosis are declining along with deaths among HIV-negative tuberculosis cases; In 2010, the world met the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals target on access to safe-drinking water, as measured by the proxy indicator of access to improved drinking-water sources, but more needs to be done to achieve the sanitation target.”

Considering the available facts and data obtained nearly to the end of the life span of MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were implemented immediately in the year MDGs were projected to expire to help achieve what could not be attained by the MDGs in 2015. This was made transparent from the UN official website stating that “they seek to build on MDGs and complete what they did not achieve.” Three problems were identified by UN after the year 2015 and the first problem was unequal achievements of MDGs in some targeted countries particularly in Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states and the second has to do with how to sustain what have been achieved while advancement is made towards achieving a better world. Finally, some of the MDGs remained off-track especially the goals associated with reproductive health and child care. The UN after identifying the challenges and some gaps in the implementation of MDGs decided to launch a new set of goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations conference on sustainable development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012, gave birth to SDGs. The SDGs was implemented in 2015 to replace the MDGs with a projected life span ending in 2030. According

to WHO from their official website SDGs are “a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” The 17 SDGs, which were adopted as a global call to action by the United Nations in 2015, were aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Currently, there are no published data or statistics on the progress made globally after 6 years into the implementation of SDGs. However, there exist progress and evaluation reports of individual countries on SDGs.

In 2019, the government of Ghana published a voluntary National Review report on the progress made insofar on the implementation of the SDGs. In this report according to the president, Nana Addo-Dankwah “Four years into the implementation of the SDGs, the Voluntary National Review (2019) process has provided us the platform to assess how these initiatives are having an impact on prospects for achieving the Goals. The results are, indeed, encouraging, but they also show that we are far from where we need to be, and, indeed, want to be.” And the report claimed that a “considerable progress has been recorded in the key indicators on the social goals but not at the rate required to achieve the SDGs’ targets by 2030.” However, this report least made mention of the progress made in the areas pertaining to environmental health and protection goals. In the case of Ghana on SDGs, the situation may vary from country to country based on the individual strategies applied in the implementation of the SDGs.

The conclusion made by UN on the overall outcome of the MDGs from their official website and I quote “Substantial progress has been made regarding the MDGs. The world has already realized the first MDGs of halving the extreme poverty rate by 2015. However, the achievements have been uneven, particularly in Africa, and some MDGs remain off-track,” shows that there are some significant factors responsible for hampering the full realization of the implementation of MDGs. In the case of Ghana after the expired life span of MDGs, the VNR report (2019) published revealed the challenges encountered by its implementation and other lessons which have informed the implementation arrangements for SDGs. The progress made in Ghana since the implementation of SDGs in 2015 has been considerably slow relative to the SDGs targets by 2030 (VNR Report, 2019). This reveals the fact that there may be some challenges facing the implementation of SDGs that are responsible for the relatively slow progress being attained as at 2019 in Ghana. Some of the challenges mentioned in the VNR report (2019) are as follows:

1. A greater percentage of the population lacks inadequate knowledge of the SDGs;
2. Low financial support from various stakeholders;
3. Low capacity for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Surely, there is no success attained without encountering challenges, which need to be overwhelmed. Probably, other countries that have adopted and integrated the SDGs into their national policy may be facing varying degree of challenges when one makes an extrapolation from the available data provided in the VNR report (2019).

In order to achieve successfully the set targets of SDGs by 2030, the following three dimensions of sustainable development must be strengthening and these include: Economic, Social, and Environmental.

The United Nations believe that eradicating poverty is the greatest worldwide challenge and an indispensable requirement to achieve sustainable development (UN Agenda 2030). However, basically I recognized achieving a good healthy environment to be the greatest challenge since the environment provides the primary resources required for economic development in many nations. Degradation of the environment leads to climate change, which affect agriculture in many ways ranging from inconsistency in weather, seasons, change in rainfall patterns, severe drought, and loss of biodiversity. These would result to reduction in raw materials for industries and export load of a country, hence reduces the economic status of a country. The impact of climate change does not only affect economic activities but also social life and poverty.

After a close analysis and evaluation of the three major and indivisible dimensions of sustainable development, I maintained that the environmental health system of a community is pivotal to the success of the SDGs. It is better to live a normal life but not poor and in good health than to be rich but spending money always on treating one's deteriorating health. There is a proverbial saying that "a sick and rich person can give the servants money to work for him/her but he/she cannot give them drug in any form to take so that he/she will recover from the sickness." This then tells us that when much efforts are geared towards strengthening the environmental health system poverty in marginalized areas that are affected by climate change but could not receive any assistance from the government or international philanthropic organizations will be ameliorated to help attain SDGs number 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. It will, in addition, decrease the expenditure of the government on tackling outbreak of diseases.

Gross-Davis (2020) define environmental health as "addressing all the physical, chemical, and biological factors external to a person, and all related factors impacting behaviors. It encompasses the assessment and control of those environmental factors that can potentially affect health. It is targeted towards preventing diseases and creating health supportive environments." Physical and social environments actually play a major role in the health of individual and community as this can be deduced from the three dimensions of the SDGs. The physical environment includes the air, water and soil through which exposure to chemical, biological, and physical agents may occur. The social environment includes companies, industries, transportation, urban development, land use, agriculture, and rural development. Human beings and wildlife depend on the environment for survival and healthy living. This means that the impairment of any element of the environment – air, water, soil, vegetation – will have adverse impact on human health and wildlife. Like bacteria colony growth decreasing in a culture medium due to decrease in food quantity and accumulation of waste, we are susceptible to depletion of essential resources for survival and poisoning by our own waste products generated and released into the environment. Therefore, maintaining a healthy and quality environment must be the utmost priority by the human race since there is no other planet we can call home. According to WHO from their official website stated that "healthier environments could prevent almost one-quarter of the global burden of disease. The COVID-19 pandemic is a further remainder of the delicate relationship between people and our planet. Clean

air, stable climate, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, safe use of chemicals, protection from radiation, healthy and safe workplaces, sound agricultural practices, health-supportive cities and built environments, and a preserved nature are all prerequisites for good health.” However, the global fight to obtain a healthy environment not only reduce the global burden of diseases but also ameliorate the social and economic problems spontaneously. The attainment of a healthy environment is crucial in meeting the many of the 17 SDGs. Less than 10 years to 2030, which is the life span of SDGs, much more effort and promising potential remedies are needed by the world to check high rate increasing pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss in order to actually transform communities and revamp economies (UNEP). The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2006) claimed that the fundamental requirement of a healthy environment are “clean air; safe and sufficient water; safe and adequate food; safe and peaceful settlement; stable global environment.” Considering carefully and critically the indispensable essentiality of obtaining a healthy environment globally, this calls for a global campaign to strengthen the environmental health system of our communities in order to attain a higher percentage of the set targets of the other two dimensions – social and economic – of sustainable development globally by the year, 2030.

Environmental health is a subset of public health where the fundamental goal is preventing diseases and promoting people’s health by ensuring a healthy environment of a community. It deals with recognizing, assessing, evaluation, understanding and controlling the impacts of people on their environment and the impacts of the environment on the public. Considering closely the objectives of environmental health, the environmental health worker/officer is an indispensable key player in accelerating and maximizing the achievements of Global Agenda 2030. In order to meet the global targets of SDGs by 2030 in the area of environmental health priorities, the need to strengthen environmental health system in the developing countries to close the gap between them and the developed countries have become substantial in the attainment of the global goals’ targets. As an environmental health officer, I suggest the following imperative points that should be considered in strengthening the environmental health system of a community and a nation as a whole in the global effort to achieve the SDGs’ targets. As a proud African and Ghanaian, to set records straight, these points dwell much more on developing countries. Perhaps some of the points may equally be effective in the developed countries. In addition, citing examples of current environmental situations of Ghana and some other part of the world, which can be used as extrapolation to assess and evaluate the larger environmental degradation and climate change across the geographical belt of Africa continent, is crucial in providing an overview picture of the environmental problem situations in other developing countries within Africa. Truly, portions of the Africa continent may be found not lying within the tropical belt, nevertheless some of those countries in such areas probably share similar environmental crisis with those in the tropical region on the same continent. I believe to share in the same thought of the other Africans that for us as a continent, the SDGs are indispensable.

Strengthening capacity-building of environmental health officers and workers of other environmental protective agencies is paramount in our effort to combat global environmental

deterioration and climate change. The government of Ghana have mainstreamed SDGs into the national development plan. This has been mainstreamed in district medium-term development plans all over the country. Considering the current overall achievements of the SDGs in Ghana where much have been done on reducing poverty and improving quality of education, it is inferring that much has not been done in providing healthy environment due to probably comparatively low capacity for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, UNICEF posted on their website that “The capacity of community leaders and local government institutions to effectively mobilize citizens for collective actions are also limited.” Therefore, the country must make efforts to train and recruit more environmental health officers and environmental protective officers to strengthen the current staff for easy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This can be achieved through co-ordination and collaboration between the Environmental Health Training Schools or related training schools and the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Health to produce quality and qualified skillful environmental health officers who will be deploy to various districts all over the country. The old staff environmental health officers should be given periodic in-service training to equip them with the required skills and knowledge – updated well-known methods of case ascertainment, new methods for continuous surveillance of environmental hazards, the use of current upgraded tools for evaluation of intervention programs – on the new approaches implemented due to changes in behavior pattern of environmental degradation to tackle the new alarming 21st century cases such as global warming; climate change; chemical hazards resulting from exposure to agrochemicals, industrial chemicals, chemicals from warfare and terrorism; solid waste that fouls our beaches, playgrounds, markets, streets and the surroundings of our homes; air pollution, and destruction of land through deforestation arising and posing environmental health risk. Considering Ghana as a developing country and its environmental issues currently, this may vary from one developing country to another. Nonetheless, similar capacity building approach can be applied in other developing countries. All these efforts I believe will strengthen the working standard of environmental health and protection staffs to accelerate and maximize the achievement of SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15 by 2030. There is the need for the mobilization of a national monitoring human resource team urgently required to intensify effective national monitoring of environmental deterioration and climate change.

It has become obvious that many projects, contracts and intervention programs have come to a halt or half way done because of lack of continuing financial support. Probably when linkage and collaboration between various environmental health and protection agencies in developing countries and other international organizations that shared a common goal and vision for financial support is under-exploited the implemented intervention programs would not yield much result as expected. The SDGs agenda should be mainstreamed in private sectors and industries long-term plans to support intervention programs aiming to achieve the Global Agenda 2030 with a percentage of their leverage since some of them release solid waste, particulate matter and toxic chemicals into the environment. For example, in December 2018 the UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources cooperate and collaborate with the Netherlands Apex Bank to launch an affordable loan scheme, the Basic Sanitation Fund, to facilitate businesses develop more affordable sanitation products for households in Ghana (UNICEF website). A multifaceted financial support for rural and urban sanitation will immensely contribute to the realization of SDGs number 3 and 6. The mobilization of revenue from a

multifaceted dimension is key in the effort to combat urban and rural sanitation issues since some poor communities need to be supported. Furthermore, providing more infrastructures for primary health care must be intensified by supporting the intervention financially more than ever. Ghana has ever since the signing of the Alma-Ata Declaration for primary health care (PHC) in 1978 remained committed to attaining health for all. According to Nakamura, Twum and Lecorps (2019) stated that “More recently, the Ministry of Health drafted a roadmap to guide major reforms needed to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030 – focused on strengthening the PHC system from the district to the community level and includes key strategies for reforming services delivery and improving health financing.” This fact shows that more financial support is required to attain a wide health coverage from the district level down to the villages in rural areas in order to achieve the targets of SDG number 3.

Considering the gap between developed and developing countries, the policies designed for developed countries definitely would be different from that designed for developing countries. Therefore, data and results obtained from environmental researches and monitoring of the environmental health risk cases should be made available for policy designers and environmental health laws makers to implement policies and enact laws respectively that are suitable to deal with peculiar environmental health problems associated with specific communities and geographical regions. This is because different communities in a geographical region may have varying topographical locations, hence the various districts in a given region should make much effort to identify the most environmental health indicator alarming and the behavior of environmental health pattern peculiar to each district. Moreover, identifying environmental indicators that are alarming in a particular district or geographical region will inform the designing and implementation of target intervention programs. Intervention programs involving environmental health workers/officers and other stakeholders among the staff of community-based health care facilities to help accelerate and optimize the outcome of primary healthcare must be intensified to attain the set targets of SDG 3 by 2030. The vast majority of developing countries faces sanitation problems and pollution of water bodies due to mining and agriculture activities. The existing policies for sanitation and small-scale mining companies must be thoroughly examined and reform to suit the regulation of the current solid waste pollution of commercial areas and vegetation degradation rate by miners respectively. Monitoring systems for sanitation and mining should be intensified to ensure that industrial and mining companies operate according to the laws and regulations.

The current global climate change is alarming globally. Recent news from CNN reveal some threats of climate change such as extreme floods, extreme heat wave, high extreme temperatures, heavy precipitation events, glaciers and snow cover are shrinking, and sea ice is retreating. Seas are warming, rising, becoming more acidic, and flooding is become more frequent along the U.S. coastline are all evidence of climate change crisis. Furthermore, great scientists are envisaging that the crisis half a century to a century will be disastrous if current generation did not take global action now to address the future havoc, which may face the future posterity. The surveillance and close disaster evaluation of the aforementioned threats of climate change is a pressing situation and requires urgent global action from various stakeholders all over the world to tackle the multi-dimensional causes of climate change and other environmental health issues to

achieve a stable climate and healthy environment for our future posterity. A more united mutual multi-stakeholder approach is required in our journey to combat climate change. The involvement of various stakeholders is an indispensable factor in accelerating the progress of attainment of SDGs targets by the year, 2030. Collaboration of multi-stakeholder partnership approach is promising to strengthen the environmental health system of a community. In Ghana, a multi-stakeholder partnership approach proves to improve collaborations among varying stakeholders for the implementation of SDGs (VNR report, 2019). Some of the stakeholders that were involved in the multi-stakeholder approach and have rendered their support to implementing initiatives that have contribute to the current achievements of SDGs projected by VNR report (2019) include private entities, civil society organizations, development partners, the government, traditional and religious bodies, and citizens.

The global pursuance of SDGs can never overlook the imperativeness of involving the leading voices. The politicians, charismatic leaders, traditional leaders and other demagogues must be made to comprehend the need for environmental health in-depth for them to take lead in the campaign for a healthy environment that will lead to a better future and socioeconomic outcome. I strongly believe that when these leaders are brought to the table with a common goal to engage their subjects in the common fight against environmental degradation and climate change will definitely contribute enormously to the achievement of the SDGs 6, 13,14 and 15 targets by 2030. Example, the first speech delivered in 2009 at the UN general assembly by the President of the United States of America, Obama, nine months into office promote the need to deal with climate change since the dangers it poses cannot be denied. Suppose same is done all over the world by leaders, who share a common goal and future, of various life endeavor, the vast majority will respond to this global call. For example, sanitation problem in Ghana is becoming one very prevalent alarming case especially in the urban centers of the country due to their cosmopolitan and multi-cultural nature characteristics. In this case, I urge the government, traditional and other religious leaders to intensify campaigning and promoting sanitation and hygiene on various podiums through social mobilization.

It can never be denied that the bases of technology, strong economy and discoveries in history is education. Education, therefore, is the indispensable bases to achieving the global goals' targets by the year 2030. This can be achieved by organizing community-based outreach, school-based outreach and nationwide outreach and educating the inhabitants of a community, all students ranging from lower primary to tertiary, and the populace of a nation. This calls for training and equipping our environmental health workers/officers and workers of other environmental protective agencies with the required knowledge and skills before deploying them to the various communities. Other media that can be utilize to educate the populace include television, radio, public hoards, the internet, etc. All these among others must be intensified to accelerate and maximize the achievements of the set targets of the SDGs. We must intensify the education of the current generation on the undoubtable detriment pose by climate change and environmental deterioration to future generation and encourage them to continue the fight to combat these threatening environmental indicators but not to go back and waste the many efforts and

investments made for decades to century. We must make the future generations know that we care about them. We must make future generations laud us for our great effort and investment made to protect them from the dangers of climate change and environmental deterioration since we have only one planet, the earth, to depend on for survival.

I believe that nearly all countries in the world have environmental health laws, traditional laws and By-laws employed to protect the environment from becoming modified resulting to its degradation. The enactment of these laws gave birth to enforcement agencies to make sure the laws are at work effectively in the community. This goal of environmental health and protection may be shared universally but the approach may vary from country to country. Therefore, to achieve SDGs number 6, 13, 14, and 15, strong environmental protection and environment health institutions that are independent and free of political interference are needed. Some of the agencies in Ghana responsible for protecting the environment and regulating the impact of anthropogenic activities that lead to environmental degradation and associated health concerns include; Environmental health agency, Environmental Protection Agency, and Energy commission. In order to accelerate the goal of protecting and restoring the environment, the agencies responsible must enforce the associated laws to compel recalcitrant ones who disregard the nitty-gritty requirement of the laws to comply. Take an instance, the vulnerable population comprise of children, the aged and pregnant women who spend more time in the home. These populations must be protected from environmental hazards resulting from substandard housing conditions, which are threatening to health and safety, by enforcing decent and affordable standard housing laws. In addition, sanitation laws must be fully enforce considering the behavior of the majority of Ghanaians and other African countries. For the environmental health laws to work, we need to cultivate sanitation spirit and behavior in the inhabitants of the Africa continent through forceful means. For example, the President of the Forth Republic of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo Dankwa, in his speech on a sanitation campaign launched in April, 2017 stated “The commitment we are making and which I want you all to make with me is that by the time we end our four-year term, Accra is going to be the cleanest city in Africa.” However, this dream was not made a reality or realized because of the intransigent behavior of most inhabitants in Accra towards sanitation laws. This, I strongly believe, can be attain by setting up a new agency to train environmental health guards who will be deploy to various commercial centers such as the market places, lorry stations and other commercial areas to monitor the sanitary conditions of these areas throughout each day. Like security guards, the main function of the environmental health guard is to be watchful and discourage anyone who generates waste from leaving the waste on the floor. Moreover, the politicians must have regard for these agencies as responsible to achieving greater proportion of the national development priorities. All these will help strengthen our environmental health system to contribute to the full realization of SDG number 6 by 2030. I therefore call on the government and other philanthropic organizations to buttress the suggested intervention above with the effort to ingrained sanitary spirit in Africans all over developing nations in Africa.

Research capacity related to SDGs should be strengthen by intensifying coordinated efforts to ascertain various policy gaps for each SDG. These policy gaps will inform the policy makers to review the policy implemented for the achievement of a particular SDG to help accelerate and maximize the attainment of that goal by the year 2030. The environmental health

worker/officer on the field should know the health indicator for sustainable development that is lagging among others in the community where he/she works. This requires a general multi-agency survey on the populations of various health indicators for health and sustainable development. The multi-agency research survey will bring on board the cooperation and collaboration of different agencies that deal with environmental health and protection for sustainable development. The aftermaths of the general multi-agency survey will inform the government and other organizations on areas that are performing poorly. This will guide the environmental health or environmental protection worker to set research priorities and the outcome of such researches will guide those who design policies for implementation and review of environmental laws. Therefore, this calls for general population survey on health indicators such as energy, green jobs, water and food, in various communities in the developing countries to know areas to be strengthened in order to achieve a healthy environment. The general population survey in the developing countries should concentrate on the following areas; the percentage of the population depending on clean fuel, cooking and heating technologies; the percentage of workplaces meeting the fundamental occupational health and safety standards; the percentage of population that have access to and depend on safe drinking water; percentage of the population that have access improved sanitation; percentage of population that have access to healthy food ; the percentage of health care facilities that have access to clean water and energy. This will give an overview of the current healthy status of the environment. The research results should be packaged well and its dissemination should be made unlimited for consumption by private sectors, development organizations and other research institutes in order to coordinate sufficient efforts across research institutions to attain quality and reliable data for evidence-based policy making and review.

The need to identify gaps in the recent approaches employed by Environmental Health workers/ officers to deal with environmental health issues is paramount to strengthening the current environmental health system. Therefore, the environmental health worker/officer on the field should be provided with all the needed materials to carry out an impact assessment of a given approach or policy on the field and record all the identified gaps. This will inform the implementers about the weakness of the approach or policy to review and strengthen the approach or policy to maximize the outcome.

The country must have a clear plan on how to tackle sanitation issues, water sustainability issues, land use issues, agriculture issues, industrial issues and expansion of primary health care (PHC) facilities. Drafting a clear national plan will guide the nation to design strategic policies and target invention oriented to combat with some of the complicated issues associated with environmental health. Considering closely one of the reasons stated by UNICEF as to why Ghana faces sanitation problems is that “As there is no clear urban basic sanitation strategy and plan in Ghana.” This is to inform Ghana the way forward to strengthen the fight against sanitation problems.

The other easy way that diseases can enter into a country is through the borders, harbors and ports. This means there should be a vigorous quarantine at various entry into a country for disease surveillance. For instance, the recent outbreak of Ebola virus disease in the West Africa and the COVID -19 pandemic have put most West African and other African countries to be on

the look-out to appropriate any victim at the various entry into a country to prevent and minimize the further pervasiveness of such diseases. There has been amelioration in the quarantine of foreigners at the various entry points over the past decades. Nevertheless, there exist some challenges and quarantine gaps, which must be dealt with and tackled strategically. This calls for national concern to strengthen the quarantine service at the various check points. Intensifying our quarantine services at the various entry point into a country will definitely contribute to maximizing the attainment of SDG number 3. This can be achieved by providing the staff with updated technologies on quarantine, increasing the strength of the staff, supply of sufficient working tools and materials and periodic in-service training on new approaches. The old staff must periodically be trained on the use of new and updated equipment to provide them with the skills and knowledge required to work efficiently with that advance equipment.

Truly, the author's claim that strengthening the environmental health system of our communities will maximize attaining the targets of SDGs by 2030 is in the right direction. However, much investment and effort need to be given to third world countries to strengthen their environmental health system, which will definitely help bridge the gap between first class and third class world, to maximize the overall achievements of the targets of SDGs by 2030. In addition, I expect African leaders to wake-up and respond more intensely to the global agenda 2030 and to cooperate, collaborate and take an effective collective action to tackle environmental issues prevalent to the continent.

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