

## REPORT ON

### A SENSITISATION /ADVOCACY PROGRAMME ON ALCOHOL AND DRIVING (DRINK-DRIVING)

BY THE GHANA HEALTH SERVICE AND BARAKA POLICY INSTITUTE

**DATE/PERIOD:** 22<sup>ND</sup> – 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2016

**PROJECT LOCATION:** BRONG AHAFO REGION

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*SENSITISATION OF DRIVERS AND THEIR UNION MEMBERS ON THE DANGERS OF DRINK DRIVING AND A CALL ON THEM TO STAY AWAY FROM ALCOHOL DURING WORKING (DRIVING) HOURS*

*VISIT TO THE VARIOUS DRIVER UNIONS (GPRTUAND PROTOA) AND ENGAGE THEM IN INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON THE HAVOC DRINK DRIVING CAUSES ON THE ROAD, LEADING TO SEVERAL LOST OF LIVES EVERY YEAR.*

#### **RESOURCE PERSONS (TEAM MEMBERS):**

- 1. MR DIVINE DZAPO, GHANA HEALTH SERVICE, ACCRA**
- 2. DR ENOCH DEBRAH, MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY, BRONG AHAFO**
- 3. MR ADAM YUNUS, BARAKA POLICY INSTITUTE, ACCRA**

#### **PROJECT OBJECTIVE:**

*To sensitize Drivers on the consequences involved in taking alcohol whilst driving, otherwise known as drink-driving. By this, the programme seeks to reduce the road carnages that are directly alcohol related or induced.*

#### **Background/Rationale**

It is a well known and universally accepted fact that, Alcohol and driving is **a deadly mix**. This has been confirmed by several epidemiological data together with many controlled studies of alcohol and driving skills.

Alcohol affects driving in so many ways from poor judgment which affect reaction to poor vision.

Alcohol is involved in about 40% of Traffic deaths globally and over 1.5million lives are lost as a result of road accidents caused by drink driving, (According to the Institute of Health Studies, Unites States, 2004).

In Ghana, about 4,000 lives are lost every year due to alcohol and driving, (National Road Safety Report, 2013).

It is against this background that the Ghana Health Service with technical support from the Baraka Policy Institute, BPI, Accra, embarked on the sensitization programme for Drivers on the dangers of drink-driving.

### **Activity**

The team will seek audience from the Driver union leaders at the particular lorry station and request to speak with the drivers on the subject. After permission is granted (mostly granted and drivers were mobilized within a short period), the team will introduce themselves and the mention the purpose of their visit in a very interactive manner.

About 15 minutes talk by the *team* at each Lorry Station followed by Questions and Contribution session which usually took another 15minutes, making it *30minutes in all*.

### **The General Information which were given to the Drivers**

- That Alcohol drinking and driving is a deadly mix. It can result in the lost of the driver and passengers, (several recent accidents which could be avoided by drivers were cited). Alcohol intake affects the vision of a driver especially at night and also affects his judgment levels. This slows down reaction level by a driver in responding swiftly and quickly to any event on the way. During driving, the brain of the driver is seriously put to maximum use and alcohol affect the brain that turns to impair it during the period when alcohol has been taken.
- Since alcohol is not an illegal commodity (there are efforts to control and regulate its usage, though), the best to time for a driver who wish to consume alcohol is when at home *BUT NOT WHEN AT WORK*. Notwithstanding the fact that, alcohol consumption, especially when uncontrolled, has serious harmful effects on the body of a person (Some

pictures of an effected human body was shown to them and drivers were very devastated upon the sight of the pictures).

**Note:** Full pictorial presentation were made for about 2 minutes in the course of the talk)

- The Ministry of Health is currently preparing a National Alcohol Policy which will regulate alcohol production and consumption in Ghana and check drunk driving (a copy of the draft National Alcohol Policy was shown to them).
- The issues raised above equally applied to any intoxicants that affect the brain and induce stress or provide extra abnormal energy for work. Some of the identified include cocaine or wee, Snuff and some drinks made of some herbs purportedly taken to provide extra energy for continuously restless driving.
- Ordinarily, even under no alcohol influence and to minimize stress, a driver ought to take between 15minutes-30minutes rest after every 5/6 hours of continues driving.

### **Feedback Summary from the Drivers**

Some drivers asked questions whilst others recounted their personal experiences usually involving an accident or a near accident either by themselves or a person close to them which had resulted in the lost of lives, all due to alcohol driving. The seniors among them (mostly retired) gave pieces of advice to the younger drivers and also expressed their gratitude for the visitation which they described as most effective way of reaching out to them with such message.

---

#### *SOME CONCERNS AND ISSUES RAISED BY DRIVERS*

1. Drivers who wish to drink should do so only when at home (ie, not during work)
2. Alcohol in itself is not a good thing that must be consumed by a person.
3. Drivers must also be extra patient on the road.
4. There is the need for strict laws and sanctions. Drivers advised Government to come out with enforceable laws and sanction Drivers who are caught drunk whilst driving.

5. Drivers must advise one another to stay away from alcohol, especially when driving.

6. Some Drivers have resorted to other drugs and intoxicants rather than alcohol ( common among such drugs are, wee and a particular snuff locally called, “Asere”

**Response from Health official:** all such drugs and drink have the same effect as that of alcohol on the brain. Anything thing that intoxicates and put stress on the brain should be avoided completely when driving

7. Some Drivers alleged that they gain extra energy and confidence when they take alcohol or such drug

**Response from Health official:** such confidence are only false and extra energy claim to provide are only for a short while and have serious health problems in the long run on the body. Again due to the overconfidence of the driver, he can easily overtake other drivers at wrong places on the road (reckless driving).

8. General advice should go for other users of the road apart from the commercial drivers

9. Commercial drivers deserve some respect especially by officials government car users and private car users

10. Government should establish taskforce at each lorry station to check drivers who violates driving rules. There is already a driving law that forbids drivers from drinking alcohol. What is needed is its enforcement.

**LOCATIONS:** The major towns which were covered during the tour includes:  
BEREKUM, DORMAA, DUAYAW NKWANTA, BECHEM, HWEDIEM, KENYASI,  
TECHIMAN, WENCHI, KINTANPO, NKORANZA & SUNYANI

### **RECOMMENDATION**

During the Sensitization programme, Drivers made numerous observations and have been put in the following recommendations:

1. The sensitization programme should be repeated regularly, since they hardly receive such education.
2. Drivers requested that they should be pre informed about the sensitization programme so that a full membership would be attained.
3. General advice on reckless driving and risks associated with it should be given to other road users as well.
4. Government should establish taskforce at each lorry station to check drivers who violates driving rules.
5. There is the need for collaboration between various agencies of the road safety campaign group.
6. Driver union leadership (GPRTU & PROTOA) should be assisted to organize frequent driver training and education for their members.

### **BENEFIT OF THE PROGRAMME TO BPI**

1. *Recognition:* BPI has begun to receive recognition by state institution, ie; the health institutions in this case), as a Think Tank in the campaign against substance abuse. BPI was the only Think Tank or Civil society involved in the programme.
2. *Building Capacity/Acquisition of further knowledge:* the BPI representative acquired increased knowledge in the field of substance abuse, particularly on Alcohol, which will help in the campaign against Substance Abuse.