

**IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SEVENTH
PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF
GHANA**

**REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS**

ON THE

**2019 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1

The Hon. Minister for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta presented the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government for the 2019 Financial Year to the House on Thursday, 15th November 2018, in accordance with article 179 of the 1992 Constitution. The Rt. Hon. Speaker, pursuant to Order 140(4) and 182 of the Standing Orders of the House referred the Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Information to the Committee on Communications for consideration and report.

1.2 Accordingly, the Committee met with the Hon. Minister for Information, Mr. Kojo Oppong Nkrumah and Officers of his Ministry on Wednesday, 12th December, 2018 and considered the referral. The Committee also had the benefit of further clarifications from Officials of the Ministry of Finance.

The Committee extends its appreciation to the Hon. Minister and his team and Officers from the Ministry of Finance for their co-operation.

2.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Committee, in its deliberations, was guided by the following documents:

- i. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.
- ii. The Standing Orders of the Parliament of Ghana.
- iii. The Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Information for the 2018 financial year.

- iv. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2018 Financial Year.
- v. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2019 Financial Year.

3.0 MISSION STATEMENT

The Ministry of Information exists to facilitate free flow of adequate, timely and reliable information and feedback between government and its various publics for socio-economic empowerment and enhanced democratic citizenship.

4.0 IMPLEMENTING DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

The Agencies and Institutions listed below have the responsibility of implementing the policies and programmes of the Ministry:

- a. Ghana News Agency (GNA.)
- b. Information Services Department (ISD).
- c. Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).
- d. Ghana Publishing Company Limited (GPCL).
- e. Graphic Communications Group Company Limited (GCGCL).
- f. New Times Corporation (NTC).

5.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

The broad policy objectives of the Ministry in line with the Medium-Term Development Plan are to:

- i. Deepen Transparency and Public accountability.
- ii. Enhance capacity for policy formulation and coordination.
- iii. Demystify the Presidency and bring the President closer to the people.

- iv. Promote the fight against corruption and economic crimes.
- v. Improve participation of civil society (media, traditional authorities, religious bodies) in national development.
- vi. Promote discipline in all aspects of life.
- vii. Ensure responsive governance and citizen participation in the development dialogue.

6.0 PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR 2018

6.1 A total amount of One Hundred and Seven million, Three Hundred and Forty-six Thousand, and Sixty-seven Ghana Cedis (GH¢107,346,067.00) was allocated to the Ministry of Information to carry out of its programmes and activities for the 2018 financial year.

Table 1 gives a summary of releases as at October 2018.

TABLE 1: RELEASES OF APPROVED BUDGET AS AT OCTOBER 2018

ITEM	Approved Budget (¢)	Releases as at October (¢)	Variance (¢)	Variance %
Compensation of Employees	75,921,609.00	53,607,808.09	22,313,800.91	29.39%
Goods and Services	27,143,561.00	23,064,513.73	4,079,047.27	15.03%
Capital Expenditure	4,280,897.00	1,548,133.78	2,732,763.22	63.84%
Total	107,346,067.00	78,220,455.60	29,125,611.40	27.13%

Source: Ministry's Presentation on Year 2018 Performance

The Committee observed that as at October 2018, an amount of GH¢78,220,455.00, representing about 72.9% of the Ministry's total budgetary allocation of GH¢107,346,067.00 had been released.

6.2 The Ministry during the year under review implemented various activities some of which are enumerated below:

- Organised Two National Policy Summits to explain government policies and programmes to citizens. The Summits were to generate interest, and create acceptability and social ownership of policies, programmes and projects.
- Organised 100 Town Hall meetings to enable government appointees and public servants engage citizens in their localities on public policies and programmes. Such interaction enabled appointees gather feedback on various policies and programmes for government's attention.
- Organised 10 Meet-The-Press series which featured the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture among others.
- Printed and distributed 10,000 copies of the Ghana Today Magazine which highlighted government priority areas and achievements.
- Organised three public education campaigns to sensitize the public on the dangers of illegal mining, key policies in the 2018 budget, and the need for citizens to pay their taxes among others.
- Successfully hosted the World Press Freedom Day on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2018. In all about 900 persons participated in the event which drew about 500 foreigners to the country.
- Processed 9,308 local stories and 4,200 foreign news bulletins on health, Education, Science, Politics, Business, Sports and Social issues among others. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) continued to maintain its reputation as a credible news channel and entered into News Exchange Programme with some foreign News Agencies.

- In pursuance of its mandate as a public broadcaster, and creating interest and involvement of citizens in the governance process, GBC successfully covered the following national events:
 - Encounter with the press by the President at the Jubilee House;
 - Public hearing of the Public Accounts Committee at Parliament House;
 - Commissioning of the Mother and Child Care Unit at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital;
 - Launching of the Police Transformation Programme at Alisa Hotel;
 - Vetting of the Special Prosecutor;
 - The ECOWAS Summit at the Accra International Conference Centre;
 - The 28th February Crossroad Shooting; and
 - The President's Independence Awards for school children among others.

7.0 BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR YEAR 2019

7.1 A total budgetary provision of **One Hundred and Seventeen million, Nine Hundred and Fourteen Thousand, and Three Hundred and Thirty Cedis (GH¢117,914,330.00)** has been made for the Ministry of information to implement its programmes and activities for year 2019. The breakdown is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: 2019 Budgetary Allocation by Sources of Funding and Economic Classification

ITEMS	GOG (GHC)	IGF(GHC)	ABFA (GHC)	DP (GHC)	TOTAL (GHC)	%
Compensation	75,249,486	-	-	-	75,249,486	63.82
Goods & Services	9,204,391	26,642,849	-	-	35,847,240	30.40
Capex	2,059,952	4,757,652	-	-	6,817,604	5.78
Total	86,513,829	31,400,501	-	-	117,914,330	100
%	73.37	26.63	-	-	100	

Source: Appendix 4 A & B of 2019 Budget Statement

Table 3 : Comparison between 2018 and 2019 Budgetary Allocation to MoI

Item	2018 Budgetary Allocation	%	2019 Budgetary Allocation	%
Compensation	75,921,609	70.7	75,249,486	63.8
Goods and Service	27,143,561	25.3	35,847,240	30.4
CAPEX	4,280,897	4.0	6,817,604	5.8
Total	107,346,067	100	117,914,330	100

Source: Budget Statement for years 2018 and 2019

8.0 Outlook for 2019

8.1.1 The Ministry in the ensuing year, plans to organize four (4) National Policy Summits on a wide range of subjects. The objective is to create an avenue for industry players and implementers of public policy to collaborate and work together towards the achievement of government's transformation agenda. Through these engagements, Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) account for their work and receive feedback.

8.1.2 To ensure responsive governance and promote citizen participation in the development dialogue, the Ministry in 2019, will hold 60 town hall meetings across the country. This engagement will create a platform for appointees such as DCEs and MMCEs to explain programmes and activities to citizens and also enable them express their concerns for appropriate action

8.1.3 The Ministry intends to organise 144 press briefings to deepen transparency and public accountability.

8.1.4 In order to court wide public commitment for the smooth implementation of key policies, the Ministry will, in 2019, apply the tool of development communication to explain government flagship programmes to the public.

9.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Budgetary allocation

9.1.1 The Committee observed that there has been a slight increase in the Ministry's budgetary allocation from GH¢107,346,067.00 in year 2018 to GH¢117,914,330.00 in year 2019. This represents a 9.85% increase in allocation. While the percentage allocation for Compensation decreased from 70.73% to 63.82%, the percentage allocation for Goods and Services and Capital Expenditure increased from 25.29% to 30.40% and 3.99% to 5.78% respectively.

Notwithstanding the slight increase, the paltry amount made available for Goods and Services and Capital Expenditure may pose a challenge to the Ministry in achieving its objectives.

9.2 Ghana News Agency (GNA)

9.2.1 The Ghana News Agency has been allocated an amount of GH¢6,662,831.77 for its programmes for year 2019. This amount comprises compensation of GH¢ 5,844,742.00, Goods and Services of GH¢ 514,669.61 and Capital Expenditure of GH¢ 303,420.11.

9.2.2 The Committee was informed that GNA does not have the requisite staff to drive modern news agency practices. Over the years, GNA has lost many of its staff to resignation and early retirement. The Agency currently has a staff strength of 119 instead of the established post of 230. The Committee was informed that efforts by the Agency to obtain clearance from the Ministry of Finance to recruit did not receive the needed approval. To enable the Agency pursue its goal of giving effective coverage to the rural and underlying areas of the country, to ensure development,

the GNA trained additional 20 stringers to help improve rural news reporting and coverage. However, as a result of delays in the release of funds for year 2018, the Agency could not promptly pay the required fees to stringers. This created low morale among stringers, which affected their motivation to go out to gather stories.

Furthermore, the delay in the release of funds, and sometimes, the non-release of funds for Goods and Services undermined the capacity of the agency to purchase electricity, broadband and fuel for their operations.

9.2.3 It came to the attention of the committee that no allocation was made for Capex for year 2018. This development prevented the Agency from executing some planned projects. For year 2019, GNA plans to renovate its Head office building, purchase five pick-up vehicles and also restore its broken-down News Management System or server.

The Committee was informed that the Agency has planned to set up an automated news management system to gather, process, disseminate, archive and distribute news and information through the application of emerging technology. The automation of the news management system will enable the agency apply a variety of progressive features to send information in text, audio, visual or graphic formats. It is important to note that unlike the manual system which is prone to delays and inefficiencies, the automated news management system is more user friendly, cost effective, fast and accessible from anywhere in the world.

9.2.4 It came to the fore during deliberations that, in 2018, GNA planned to digitalise its operations by leveraging on technology. The Agency therefore made provision of GH3,384,000.00 to undertake the project and set up a GNA Digital Unit. However, due to unavailability of funds, the Agency could not realise this objective. Currently, the GNA lacks any functional technological platform for commercial news gathering and distribution of information, thus gradually losing its relevance to hi-tech private media. It is sad to note that for year 2019, the Agency has been provided only GH¢303,420.11 under capital expenditure. This would make it difficult for GNA to pursue this objective. The Committee therefore underlined the need for the Ministry of Finance to adequately resource the Agency to

enable it take advantage of technology to reposition itself on the media landscape to remain more relevant within the modern information society.

9.2.5 It is heart-warming to know that in spite of the challenges that GNA faces, it continues to maintain its reputation as a credible news source both in and outside the country. GNA presently has partnership agreements with news wire Agencies in Nigeria, Ivory Coast, South Korea, China and Palestine and in 2019, plans to pursue more news exchange agreements with other news Agencies in order to maintain its visibility in the international media space.

The Agency is present in all the ten regions of the Country gathering stories (which sometimes may not have a commercial appeal to private media houses) processing and disseminating truthful and unbiased news. It is worthy of note that the Agency through its coverage of rural news is able to bring to the attention of relevant authorities, issues confronting the poor and under-privileged for necessary action.

The Committee believes that GNA's high reputation as a credible news outlet both within Ghana and abroad is an important asset that the Agency can leverage on to regain its status as a leader in the media space, given the needed government support.

9.3 Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)

9.3.1 A total amount of GH¢75,644,139.97 has been provided for the Ghana Broadcasting corporation (GBC) for the 2019 financial year. This amount represents an increase of 19.67% over the 2018 allocation of GH¢63,212,378.00.

9.3.2 GBC faces a serious challenge of continuously losing its core technical and editorial staff to resignation and retirement. Unfortunately, in year 2017, GBC could not obtain clearance from the Ministry of Finance to

recruit. Although the Corporation made provision in its 2018 budget to recruit 100 persons, approval was given to recruit only two. For year 2019, GBC plans to recruit 60 people to augment its staff strength. To enable GBC position itself as the leader in the broadcasting and communications industry, it is imperative among others that it engages people with the requisite skills and competences.

9.3.3 The Committee was informed that GBC is indebted to the tune of GH¢48,407,799.08. Currently, it is in arrears of electricity bills to the tune of GH¢20,436,456.34 and as a result, experiences frequent disconnections by ECG. It came to the fore during deliberations that, various public institutions are indebted to GBC to the tune of GH¢19,188,177,60 for services rendered. It is important that GBC takes the necessary steps to recover debts owed the Corporation by government agencies and institutions to enable it recover its operational cost and also settle part of its outstanding commitments. Furthermore, the Committee proposes that GBC hasten the commercialisation of three of its channels to generate revenue to support its operations. It should also explore a more sustainable mode of funding the Corporation to make it more competitive.

9.3.4 It is informative to note that GBC's IGF retention rate which was previously 100% was capped to 66% in year 2017. The Committee, having regard to the Corporation's circumstances and the serious implications of the capping for its operations, recommended in its 2018 budget report to the plenary, that the Ministry of Finance gives an exemption to GBC to retain 100% of its IGF. The Committee is happy to report that approval has been given for GBC to retain all funds generated internally. Revenue realized will go a long way to support the activities of the Corporation.

9.3.5 The Committee was informed that some major equipment needed for the smooth operations of GBC are obsolete as they were purchased as far back as 2005. Thus, the Corporation experiences frequent breakdown of these equipment which have a high maintenance cost. Acquiring new equipment is capital intensive and therefore calls for the support of Government. In this regard, it is important more now than ever for GBC

to be given adequate resources to procure some critical equipment to enable the Corporation migrate from analogue unto the digital platform.

9.4 Information Services Department (ISD)

9.4.1 The Information Services Department (ISD) has been allocated an amount of GH¢25,520,590.97 to fund its operations for year 2019. This is made up of GH¢24,161,104.37 for compensation GH¢956,674.05 for Goods and Services and GH¢402,812.55 for Capital Expenditure

9.4.2 The ISD continues to be confronted with the challenge of inadequate staff, thus affecting the Department's ability to effectively deliver on its mandate. Attempts by ISD over the years to recruit to augment its staff strength have not yielded positive results. The Department which has offices in all ten (10) regions, 182 out of the 254, districts and in three (3) foreign missions currently has a staff strength of 961 instead of the established post of 1,500.

In 2019, the Department has budgeted to recruit 90 people to support the extension of its information dissemination activities to more Ghanaians. It also plans to increase the number of information officers in Ghana's Missions abroad, with the view to expanding its mandate of promoting the country's international agenda.

For year 2019, the ISD plans to refocus on sharpening the public relation (PR) functions and Public Education Campaigns to develop a highly professional class responsible for managing stakeholder engagement with government. In this regard, the Department seeks to design and implement a comprehensive training programme to upgrade and enhance the skills of staff.

9.4.3 It came to the attention of the Committee that most of ISD's equipment are either obsolete or inadequate making it quite difficult for the Department to effectively execute its development communication mandate. For example, the Department has just about fifty (50) cinema vans which are over ten years old and needs urgent replacement. In order for the Department to meet its development communication objectives, it

is important that ultra-modern cinema vans are provided for each district to enable ISD disseminate important government information and also solicit timely feedback. To this end, the ISD in 2019, seeks to strengthen its multimedia capacity by purchasing 10 ultra-modern cinema vans and special tricycles with audio visual equipment to enable it effectively undertake its outreach programmes.

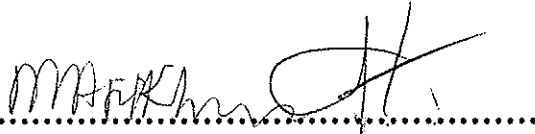
The Committee noted that the nature of work of the Department requires that Staff moves around constantly to educate, inform, and interact with stakeholders. These public education and sensitization campaigns carried out across the country are to be monitored to ensure that they achieve the desired impact. Unfortunately, Headquarters lack vehicles to undertake this important monitoring exercise. The Committee noted that an amount of GH¢402,812.55 provided for Capex is not sufficient to enable the Department acquire the needed logistics.

10.0 CONCLUSION

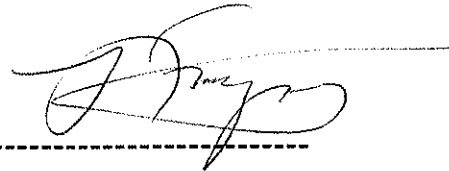
The role the Ministry of Information plays in the collection, processing and dissemination of information on government programmes and policies is fundamental to the governance process and the development of the nation. Indeed, no society today can progress without the dissemination of timely and reliable information for decision making by both government and the citizens. It is therefore imperative that the Ministry is provided the needed resources to enable it play its role effectively and efficiently.

In the light of the foregoing, the Committee recommends that the House approves the sum of **One Hundred and Seventeen million, Nine Hundred and Fourteen Thousand and Three Hundred and Thirty Ghana Cedis (GH¢117,914,330.00)** for the services of the Ministry of Information for the financial year ending 31st December, 2019.

Respectfully submitted.



**KEN OHENE AGYAPONG (HON)
(CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS**



**JANET FRIMPONG
(CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE)**

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