



A LOOMING NATIONAL DISASTER- A CASE OF OLD BASIC EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES SITTING ON TIME BOMB. STATEMENT BY HON. EMMANUEL AGYEI ANHWERE, MP FOR ATWIMA NWABIAGYA SOUTH

Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of this house to a yet unresolved phenomenon that has the propensity to cause national disaster. It has to do with the increasing dilapidated educational structures especially that of the basic schools in our country. This matter has not received the desired attention from past administrations and its increasing danger(s) is what has compelled me to raise it.

Mr. Speaker, this year alone, there has been series of structural collapses in many basic schools. On the 31st day of January at Breman Gyambra Methodist Primary School in the Odoben Brakwa District in the Central region, the collapse of a school structure resulted in eight deaths. Similarly at Nkurankuran in the Eastern region, about five pupils also sustained various degrees of injuries due to the collapse of a school building.

The good fortune for us as a country that has prevented us from recording mass deaths from such incidents is that, many of such buildings crumble during the time when the pupils and students are not in school. That is, during close of day work or during holidays. For how long can we continue to count on luck?

Mr. Speaker, basic schools serve as the foundation for our education. The quality of the basic schools is what propels students into future radiance. How can we produce another generation of astute academicians, renowned medical experts, revered lawyers and selfless leaders when the very foundation that is supposed to prepare and nurture them to climb the academic ladder are in ruins. It is sad to observe that many of our basic schools have become death traps for teachers and students rather than the centre for knowledge acquisition that it should be.

During a visit to Amadum Adankwame in my constituency, I was struck by what I saw. The basic school in this farming community which since its construction in 1933 had not seen any major renovation or repair works had its roof ripped off after a torrential rainfall on the 29th March, 2017. In spite of the danger that the facility poses to human life, children below age of 5 do travel for almost three kilometres from nearby communities like Sawua and Wuramumu to access education from this dangerous facility.

Mr. Speaker, the situation in Nerebehi also in my constituency is not different. The level of dilapidation of the basic school block which was constructed in the 1950s has reached a frightening degree. At Kontomire basic school, pupils in kindergarten and class four (4) have to use the bare floor as their tables and chairs because there are no furniture to be used by the school children. During a stopover at Amanchia Basic School, I noticed that the roof of the school had ripped off with the entire structure angled in such a manner as if it was beckoning the impact of any wind to yield to the force of nature.

There are countless examples of school structures nationwide that are over seventy (70) years and which have not received any proper renovation ever since their construction. There are communities that have schools that are in far worse conditions than what I have presented.

The likes of Boinso Presbyterian Primary and Junior High School in Aowin in the Western region, Takorase Primary in Denkyembour and Kpodzi EP Primary in Kpando and other parts of Volta region. In many parts of Northern Ghana, Upper East and West, the bad state of many school structures present a sorry picture to us as cracks on walls a veritable danger to the pupils and teachers. Simply put, they are disaster waiting to happen.

Mr Speaker, we are in the rainy season and I shudder to think what may happen if we do not attend to the collapsing walls and the rusty corrugated and the badly leaking roofs. Many of the existing old structures may not be able to stand the torrential rains and cyclonic winds it carries along. As the adage goes 'a stitch in time saves nine' we need to salvage the situation before it gets late.

Mr. Speaker, it therefore comes as no surprise the rate of mass failure in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) and the West Africa Senior Schools Certificate Examination (WASSCE) by pupils and students especially in the rural areas. This environment they study in does not allow for meaningful academic pursuit.

Mr Speaker, I therefore entreat my colleague members of Parliament, the Metropolitan Municipal District Assemblies and the Ministry of Education to collaborate to have a consensus on such structures and also come out and map up plans and processes to address such challenges.

Mr Speaker, may I use this opportunity to also call on various PTA's, non-governmental organisations, religious bodies, public and private institutions

and individuals who are best fit to help in addressing such challenges to come on board to augment the efforts by various Assemblies and the Ministry of Education towards ensuring that there is rehabilitation and renovation of weak educational structures nationwide is addressed as a matter of national exercise.

The Ministry of Education has a policy to construct schools in place of 'schools under trees'. The same policy can create a platform to bear the rehabilitation and face lifting of the very old structures.

Mr Speaker, this is the clarion call that I make this morning. I thank you very much for your attention.

