

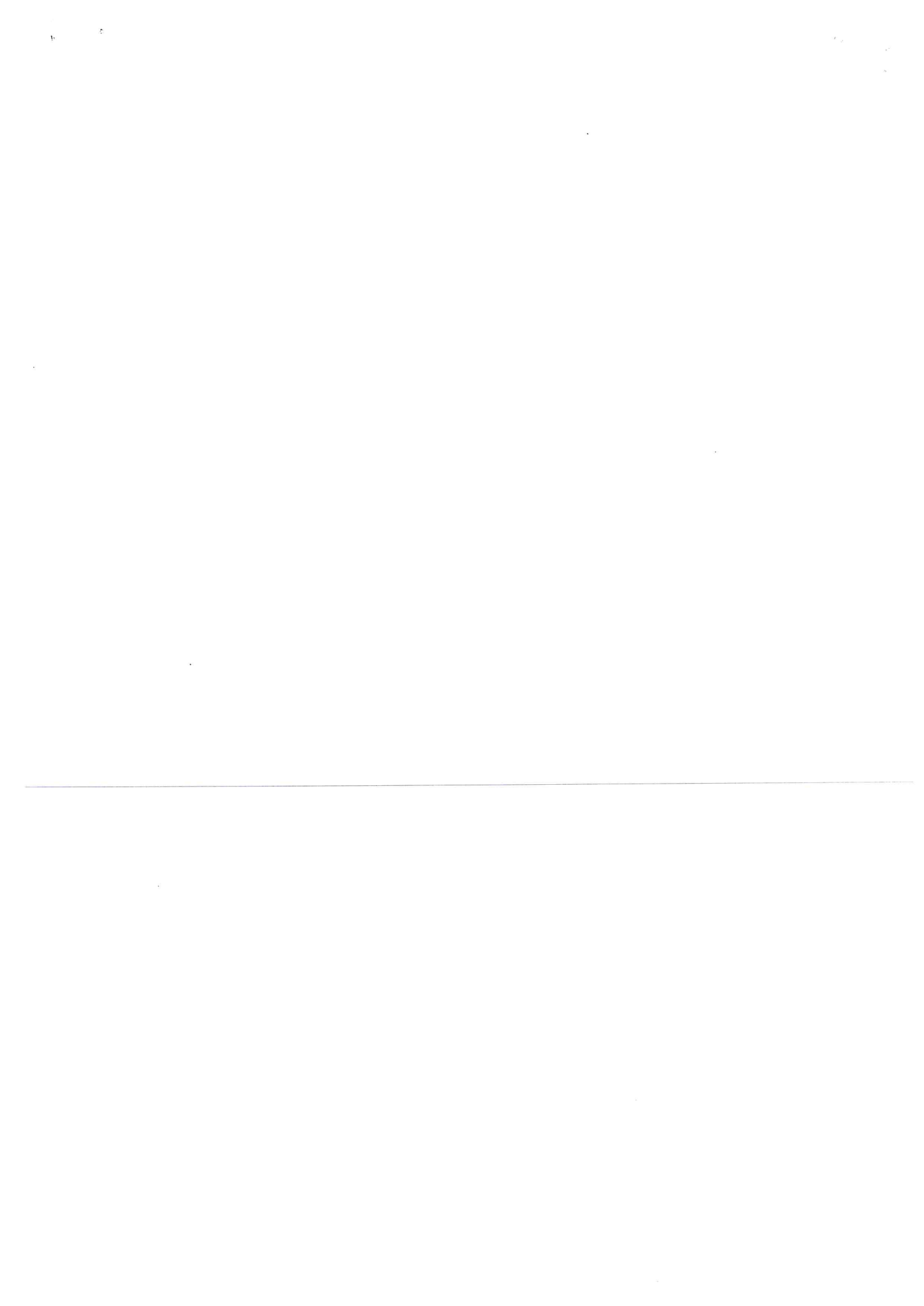
**IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SEVENTH
PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH
REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

**REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS**

ON THE

**2018 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF
THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS ON THE 2018 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with article 179 of the 1992 Constitution, the Hon. Minister for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta presented the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government for the 2018 Financial Year to the House on Wednesday, 15th November 2017. Pursuant to Order 140(4) and 182 of the Standing Orders of the House, the Rt. Hon. Speaker referred the Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Information to the Committee on Communications for consideration and report.
- 1.2 The Committee subsequently met with the Hon. Minister for Information, Alhaji Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, a Deputy Minister, Mr. Kojo Opong Nkrumah and his technical team on Friday, 8th December, 2017 and considered the referral.

The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Hon. Minister and his team for their co-operation.

2.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Committee availed itself of the following reference documents during its deliberations:

- 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 Communications for the 2017 financial year.

- iv. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2017 Financial Year.
- v. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2018 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 responsible for the implementation of the policies and programmes of the Ministry are listed below:

- 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. Promote social accountability in the public policy cycle.
- ii. Mainstream development communication across the public sector.
- iii. Improve transparency and public access to information.

- iv. Enhance the capacity of the Media for sustainable development communication, accountability and press freedom.

6.0 PERFORMANCE FOR YEAR 2017

- 6.1 The Ministry of Information, for the 2017 financial year, was allocated a total amount of **One Hundred and Forty-one million, and Seventy-eight Thousand, Seven Hundred and Two Ghana Cedis (GH¢141,078,702.00)** for the execution of its programmes and activities.

Table 1 below shows a summary of expenditure by Economic Classification as at October 2017.

TABLE 1: RELEASES OF APPROVED BUDGET AS AT OCTOBER 2017

ITEM	Approved Budget (¢)	Releases as at October (¢)	Variance (¢)	Variance %
Compensation of Employees	88,040,963.00	46,573,796.00	41,467,167.00	47.10
Goods and Services	33,387,697.00	18,216,532.00	15,171,165.00	45.44
Capital Expenditure	19,700,042.00	377,382.00	19,272,660.00	98.08
Total	141,078,702.00	65,167,710.00	75,910,992.00	53.81

Source: Ministry's presentation on year 2017 performance

The Committee noted that as at October 2017, a little over 47% of the total budgetary allocation of GH¢141,078,702.00 to the Ministry had been released. The delay and in some cases the non-release of funds prevented the Ministry from undertaking some planned programmes and activities for the year.

- 6.2 Nevertheless, the Ministry was able to carry out among others the following activities in the year under review:

- Two policy summits on the real economy & energy and Trade and Industry were successfully organised by the Ministry. The Summit on the real economy provided the avenue for the Finance Ministry to explain to

Industry and civil society, actions being taken by government to stabilise the economy to stimulate the business environment and widen fiscal space. The trade and industry summit was used to explain the opportunities to be provided by the one district, one factory (1D1F) policy and other industry related policies. The National Policy Summit enabled the Ministry undertake advocacy that created interest, acceptability and social ownership of key public policy programmes and projects.

It was expected that through the policy summits, Government would secure partnership and court the support and active participation of the private sector and civil society organisations in the implementation of policies relating to the financial sector.

- The Ministry organised 100 Town Hall meetings nationwide to enable chiefs, opinion leaders and citizens at the grassroots interact with government appointees and public servants in their localities on public policies and programmes. This greatly improved the level of interaction between government appointees and citizens and enabled government gather feedback on the quality of its programmes directly from the beneficiaries.
- The ISD organised five out of a projected 25 Meet-The-Press series. This featured the Ministries of Education (twice), Health, Water and Sanitation and Defence. The relatively low numbers of the Meet-the Press series organised is because most old and newly created Ministries are still working on restructuring and realigning programmes and activities to reflect policies of the new government.
- The Ghana Today Magazine which highlights government priority areas and achievements in the medium term was revived with over 15,000 copies of the first, second and third quarter editions printed and distributed.
- Three (3) public sensitization programmes on key policies in the 2017 budget, the dangers of “galamsey” and the need for the citizens to pay their taxes were organized. The public education on the budget was held

throughout the country and received the appropriate feedback for government attention.

On the other hand, the campaign on the dangers of galamsey, covered the worst affected regions in Ghana. In all, 40 districts in Western, Eastern, Ashanti and Central regions in Ghana were reached with 10,000 development posters on the dangers of galamsey printed and distributed.

- GNA with a reputation as a credible news channel continue to attract international attention and enabled them enter into news exchange programme with Foreign News Agencies The GNA, as part of measures to increase revenue mobilisation explored innovative ways including seeking sponsorship and placing adverts on behalf of MMDA's and credible Private companies.
- GBC in the exercise of its mandate, successfully covered 407 national events. These include:
 - The dissolution of the Old Parliament and the Inauguration of the New Parliament;
 - Inauguration of the President of the Republic of Ghana;
 - Ghana @ 60 and beyond independence celebrations;
 - Ministerial vetting;
 - First batch of Public Accounts Committee sittings;
 - Launch of the One district, One factory, Free SHS programme and the Planting for food and Jobs; and
 - The President's encounter with the media.

7.0 BUDGETARY ALLOCATION FOR YEAR 2018

- 7.1 The Ministry of Information has been allocated 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)** for the execution of its programmes and activities for year 2018. The breakdown is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: 2018 Budgetary Allocation by Source of Funding and Economic Classification

	COMPENSATION	GOODS AND SERVICES	CAPEX	TOTAL
GoG	75,921,609	9,130,510	2,168,370	87,220,489
IGF	-	18,013,051	2,112,527	20,125,578
TOTAL	75,921,609	27,143,561	4,280,897	107,346,067

Source: Ministry's presentation on year 2018 allocation

8.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Main Ministry

8.1.1 The Committee observed that the budgetary allocation of GH¢107,346,067.00 for year 2018 represents a 24% reduction in the 2017 allocation of GH¢141,078,702.00. This according to the Ministry fell far below its budgetary requirement of GH¢184,867,893.24. For instance, out of a request of GH¢37,177,831.24 million made for Goods and Services, GH¢9,130,510.00 was provided. For Capital Expenditure, only GH¢2,168,369.00 million out of a request of GH¢51,642,875.00 million was approved, leaving a difference of GH¢49,474,506.00 million.

It is worth noting that the Ministry plays an important role in fostering participation, transparency and accountability in governance. Unfortunately, the Ministry is grossly under-resourced. The allocation to the Ministry for year 2018 means that the Ministry will find it difficult to procure some critical logistics and equipment to carry out its operations.

8.1.2 The Ministry in year 2018 will concentrate its efforts at development communication to generate public interest in the formulation and implementation of policies. The Ministry will develop Communication plans for each major government policy to engender acceptability by beneficiaries in their implementation.

- 8.1.3 The Ministry intends to organize four (4) National Policy Summits on subjects ranging from Governance and Legal, Finance and Infrastructure, Social Services and Security. This is to bring together industry and implementers of public policies to deliberate on ways of working together to achieve government's agenda of transforming Ghana.
- 8.1.4 In pursuance of government's commitment to deepening transparency and accountability, the Ministry plans to hold 152 town hall meetings nationwide. This engagement between appointees and the citizens will afford Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives an avenue to explain programmes and activities to their constituents and also enable the appointees appropriately address their concerns.
- 8.1.5 The Committee was happy to note that plans are underway by the Ministry to set up a National Call Centre. The essence of establishing a National Call Centre is to receive feedback from beneficiaries of public policies to enable government improve policy outcomes generally. Currently, the Ministry has secured a toll free number and is in the process of concluding arrangement with telecom companies to deploy the infrastructure required to set up a call centre.
- 8.1.6 The Committee was informed that Ghana has been selected to host the World Press Freedom Day on the 2nd and 3rd of May 2018. The main celebration will be hosted by the Ministry of Information in collaboration with UNESCO. Events will focus on freedom of expression, press freedom and the safety of journalists. The Country is expected to host over 300 foreign and 200 local participants during this period. Participants will include the media, policy makers, civil society, human rights defenders and UN Agencies.

Giving the programmes and activities to be embarked on in year 2018, the allocation to the Ministry is considered woefully inadequate. The Ministry of Finance may therefore have to provide additional resources to the Ministry to enable it perform to its optimum output.

8.2 Ghana News Agency (GNA)

8.2.1 The Ghana News Agency (GNA) continues to exercise its mandate of collecting, processing and disseminating truthful and unbiased information and news internally and externally. GNA over the years has maintained its reputation as a credible source of news and stories in Ghana and beyond. It is exciting to note that the GNA has improved its visibility on the international media space by signing news exchange programs with South Korea News Agency and Palestine News and Information Agency.

8.2.2 The GNA as part of its goal, focus on giving effective coverage to rural areas, to bring to the attention of relevant authorities, issues confronting the poor and under-privileged. The Committee was happy to note that the Agency has trained 20 additional stringers to help improve rural news reporting and coverage.

8.2.3 For year 2018, the Agency plans to revive the GNA centre for journalism and multi media studies, GNA media monitoring and GNA events and conferences. The Agency in collaboration with the Ministry will also commence work on the digitalization of the GNA website.

The Committee was informed that GNA has lost penetration in the media landscape following the proliferation of media in Ghana. The Agency has no functional platform for commercial news gathering and distribution and is gradually losing its relevance as private media takes over the landscape to the disadvantage of government communications. Consequently, GNA has designed a 2-year Strategic Programme aimed at:

- Making GNA the leading digital news platform for wholesale and retail news in Ghana;
- Giving government a platform for regular proactive development communications/information sharing; and
- Revamping its revenue generating functions with the view to contributing to government revenue.

To execute this programme, GNA seeks to set up a unit – **GNA Digital**. A budget of Three Million, Three Hundred and Eighty-Four Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢3,384,000.00) is required to set up the project/unit.

8.2.4 GNA also plans to restore its server or News Management System to enable it run effectively. The Committee was informed that this is an automated and comprehensive news management system for gathering, processing, disseminating, archiving and distributing of news and information using the latest technology. The system makes it possible for the Agency to use a range of advanced features to distribute information in the form of text, audio, visual or graphic and assemble it in an orderly manner. The Committee was further informed that the system is an effective tool for providing unique easy to use, cost effective, fast and conveniently accessible features to the Agency to flexibly control and manage information.

The News Management System has been designed to effectively check redundancy as there are backups for each of the critical servers when the main servers are down. It has virtual capabilities and users can access it from anywhere in the world via the internet upon inputting their password and user identity.

Undoubtedly, the execution of these projects would require adequate resources. Unfortunately, no provision was made for capital expenditure for the Agency for year 2018.

8.2.5 It came to the attention of the Committee that delays in the release of funds for year 2017, affected among others the Agency's ability to purchase electricity, broad band and fuel for its operational activities. This development for instance prevented the Agency from effecting prompt payment of stringers fees. This to some extent affected news gathering, processing and dissemination of information/news as stringers lost the motivation to go out to cover stories.

8.2.6 Again, the Agency lacks the requisite staff to drive modern news agency practices. In year 2015, the Agency's staff strength was 219. As at October 2017, the Agency's staff stood at 127, which is a reduction of 92

staff. Unfortunately, the Agency, has not received financial clearance from the Ministry of Finance to recruit and is still awaiting a response to letters requesting to recruit at least 20 workers.

8.3 Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)

8.3.1 The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in year 2018 will continue to give live coverage to Government, National and Public interest programmes as well as international programmes to inform the public on issues and events happening both locally and internationally.

8.3.2 A total amount of GH¢63,212,378.00 has been provided for the corporation for the 2018 financial year as against an allocation of GH¢87,458,993.22 for year 2017. This represents a reduction by 27%.

8.3.3 The Committee was informed that GBC is confronted with a high attrition of its core technical and editorial staff. Unfortunately, the Corporation did not receive approval in year 2017 to recruit even though provision was made for it in its budget. For year 2018, GBC budgeted to recruit 100 people to augment its staff strength. However, approval was given for only two persons to be recruited. The Committee appeals to the Ministry of Finance to consider giving financial clearance to GBC to recruit more people to replace core technical and editorial staff lost to resignation and retirement.

8.3.4 It came to the attention of the Committee that GBC is inundated with debts amounting to GH¢44,989,671.11. GBC is currently in arrears of electricity bills to the tune of GH¢16,816,050.73. This has resulted in frequent disconnections by E.C.G. It is informative to note that no provision was made under GoG for goods and services to cater for GBC's outstanding commitments. However, an allocation of GH¢18,013,051.00 has been made under IGF for goods and services for year 2018. Should the outstanding electricity bill be settled out of the allocation for Goods and Services, the Corporation will be left with a paltry sum of GH¢1,197,000.27 for other activities. Compounding the problem faced by GBC is legal threats received for outstanding legacy debts.

Unfortunately, the IGF retention rate, which was previously 100%, was capped to 66% in year 2017. This situation clearly has serious implications for the operations of GBC for year 2018.

The Committee therefore urges the Ministry of Finance under the circumstance to seriously consider giving GBC an exemption to enable it retain 100% of its IGF. The Committee further urges GBC to speed up the commercialisation of three of its channels as indicated to the Committee, to enable it generate more revenue to support its operations.

8.3.5 The Committee noted that GBC is faced with the challenge of frequent breakdowns of old high power consuming transmitters and a high maintenance costs of these transmitters. Most of these transmitters need to be replaced urgently. Unfortunately, no GoG allocation was made for capital expenditure. The IGF allocation of GH¢2,112,527.00 to GBC for capital expenditure is woefully inadequate to address its investment needs.

8.3.6 The Committee was informed that services provided by GBC to other government institutions are not paid for even though invoices are issued. Giving the difficult financial situation of GBC, it is necessary that services rendered to government agencies and institutions are fully paid for to enable GBC recover its operational costs and also meet its outstanding Commitments.

If GBC is to lead the broadcasting and communication industry as indicated in its Mission Statement, there would be the need for a paradigm shift in the operations of the Corporation to make it more competitive in the industry.

8.4 Information Services Department (ISD)

8.4.1 A budgetary allocation of GH¢36,879,337.24 has been provided for the Information Services Department (ISD) for its operations for year 2018. This comprises compensation of GH¢25,929,040.00, GH¢9,670,047.24 for Goods and Services and GH¢1,280,250.00 for Capital expenditure. The allocation for year 2018 represents a 31.7% increase over last year's allocation of GH¢28,000,000.22.

8.4.2 The ISD, like most Agencies, and Departments under the Ministry lack the full compliment of staff. The ISD currently has a staff strength of 999 instead of 1,500 to ensure the effective delivery of its mandate. For year 2018, ISD applied to recruit 185 to augment its staff strength. However, ISD received approval to recruit only 3 people.

8.4.3 The ISD is currently faced with a situation where most of its equipment are either old or inadequate. For the Department to meet its development communication objectives, the ISD plans to purchase 216 ultra-modern cinema vans to enable the Department penetrate every district with important government information and also solicit timely feedback for government. It also has plans to acquire Ultra-Modern Public Address Systems and outdoor display screens to enhance its capacity to support national events. However the allocation of GH¢1,280,250.00 for capital expenditure is inadequate to enable the Department procure the public address systems, outdoor display screens and ultra-modern cinema vans needed to effectively undertake its outreach programmes.

It is important that the Department is provided with the necessary tools and resources to perform its mandate.

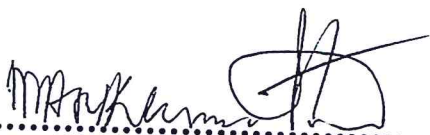
9.0 CONCLUSION

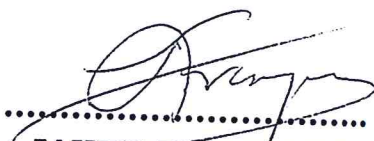
The role of the Ministry in disseminating information on government policies and facilitating exchange between policy makers and the citizenry cannot be overemphasized. This is particularly so given that the development of today's world is anchored on the availability of credible

and timely information. Ghana cannot be left behind in this new paradigm, therefore the Ministry of Information should be well positioned and provided with the requisite financial, technical and human resources to effectively and efficiently execute its mandate for the development of the nation.

In the light of this, the Committee recommends that the House approves the sum of **One Hundred and Seven million, Three Hundred and Forty-six Thousand and Sixty-seven Ghana Cedis (GH¢107,346,067.00)** for the services of the Ministry of Information for the financial year ending 31st December, 2018.

Respectfully submitted.


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


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

December 2018

