

For Immediate Release

Statement to Mark the International Day of Education 2023

International Day of Education is here with us again, **on the theme: To invest in people, prioritise education.** It is important that as we celebrate, we ponder on the best practices required to address the ongoing challenges facing the education sector in Ghana. Despite progress in recent years, available data suggests that 60% of basic school pupils continue to secondary education, leaving far too many children without the opportunity to reach their full potential. Additionally, there are currently 452,238 out-of-school children of secondary school-going age in Ghana, who are at risk of missing out on vital education and socio-economic opportunities.

Young people with disabilities (YPWD) in particular, encounter several challenges in accessing junior high school and senior high school education, even though Ghana prides itself on having a disability-inclusive educational system. Sadly, the enrollment rate for YPWD is very low, ranging from 0.4% to 1.6% annually.

Education has the power to transform lives! That is why Norsaac has over the years prioritized education and tirelessly worked to ensure that young people in marginalized communities have access to quality and inclusive education to ensure that we are leaving no one behind. On this International Day, we call for the adoption of gender-transformative approaches into our educational system to break down the walls of exclusion and segregation and accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

Over the years, governments' responses to improving the education sector in Ghana have been inconsistent and lack the needed commitment. This continues to slow progress toward achieving universal basic education in the country.

The delayed release of the Capitation Grant, inadequate financing of basic and special education, high infrastructure deficit in primary and junior high schools, and lack of adequate teachers in basic schools in deprived communities are all major challenges facing the education sector in Ghana. Furthermore, the 2020 African Development Bank Economic Outlook report highlights that Africa is the least efficient in utilizing public funds on education, with only a 58% efficiency rate of public spending allocated to basic education and a 41% efficiency rate of allocated funds to secondary education. A classical efficiency issue in the education sector is the unnecessary creation of a secretariat for the Free Senior High School Programme and the reliance on the buffer stock company to supply food to all schools across the country. A resourced Ghana Education Service which is well decentralized should be able to manage the fragmental programmes and feed pupils/students easily.

As we observe this day, we call on the government to immediately address the following;

- Pragmatic measures are instituted to review the Free SHS/TVET Policy to address issues of quality education, uninterrupted academic calendar, improve partnership with parents and sustained feeding of students.

- We sincerely believe that the centralized feeding of students under the Free Senior High School Programme is an attempt to legitimize corruption and benefit a few self-seeking individuals. Government should scrap this practice and allow district assemblies to partner with the Ghana Education Service to feed schools.
- Increase resourcing of education and efficiency. This includes investing in the training and development of teachers including more special education teachers and support staff. This has even become more important following the introduction of a new educational system in the country.
- Increase funding for schools to acquire infrastructure, necessary assistive technology and adaptive equipment such as adaptive computer equipment and special seating to ensure YPWD are not left behind.
- Timely payment of grants to schools, the timely provision of essential food items to schools and students in need, and the placement of students in schools closer to their home districts to reduce the inconvenience associated with travel to school at the SHS level.
- Adequate infrastructure must also be provided to meet the increasing enrolment due to the Free SHS/TVET Policy among other factors and to end the menace of “schools under trees”, “pupils learning on bellies” and classrooms without furniture, especially in northern Ghana.
- We also call on the government to as a matter of urgency utilize public funds more efficiently and equitably, in line with the findings of the 2020 African Development Bank Economic Outlook report. By doing so, Ghana could more than double its current impact by allocating existing secondary education resources more equitably and efficiently, while increasing educational performance at the basic level by 40%.

On this International Day of Education 2023, let us commit to working together and investing in education to ensure that all children in Ghana have access to quality education and the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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Thank you.

SIGNED

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Norsaac

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