



**ACCRA
METROPOLITAN
ASSEMBLY**

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BreatheLife Campaign, to reduce air pollution in Accra

Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) has joined the BreatheLife Campaign, a WHO and UN Environment led initiative to reduce air pollution for health and climate benefits.

AMA is the first major metropolitan entity in Africa to formally join the campaign – with the launch of community initiatives to change behaviours about waste burning, reduce other pollution sources and enhance green spaces in some of the neighborhoods worst hit by air pollution in Accra.

The City-supported community campaigns will focus first in two sub metropolitan areas Ashiedu Keteke and Ablekuma South. The activities would be concentrated in the Jamestown and Agbobbloshie areas of Ashiedu Keteke and in Chorkor and Mamprobi areas of Ablekuma South. Activities lined up include Community durbars with the chiefs and people to encourage ownership of the programs, explain the rationale for the campaign and to enhance participation in the roll out of other segments of the program, house to house sensitization which will include the involvement of noted Ghanaian musicians or sports figures who have some linkage with these identified areas.

The house-to-house sensitization is to encourage residents to stop burning waste and call available collection services. Volunteer households will take part in pilot waste segregation/recycling or composting initiatives.

Activities will also be focused at schools and health care centres. At schools, there will be promotion of green spaces development, planting of fruit trees and better waste management including waste segregation education through art competitions, fun-games and peer education.

Ghana Health Services and WHO will work with local health workers to improve awareness and training on the importance of switching to clean cookstoves.

Under the leadership of Hon Adjei Sowah, the City of Accra has committed to the BreatheLife Campaign and will be an active participant with the support of the Assembly members of these communities to deliver on the campaign. “Cities are becoming more important in the geopolitical space. Someone has to provide leadership. I am willing to do so,” said Accra Mayor, Mohammed Adjei Sowah.

The awareness-creation campaign is part of a new Urban Health Initiative, led by Ghana Health Services and WHO, and is assessing the health impacts of air pollution in the city and

planning healthier development alternatives. The Urban Health Initiative has been developed together with Ghana EPA, and a range of local and national development ministries, and is also supported by the World Bank, US EPA and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability.

In our part of the world air pollution is not prioritized as a health concern - even in the way we cook. But available statistics are so staggering that we have to wake people up to take action. We have to talk about it loudly so that it becomes part of our discourse in the urban political space. The Accra Mayor added.

In joining the Breathelife campaign, which includes prestige cities such as London UK, Singapore and Washington DC, Accra noted its key air pollution mitigating priorities as targeting:

- **Efficient mass transit & safe walking and cycling paths**
- **Improved wastewater treatment as well as collection, separation and disposal of solid waste**
- **Industrial emissions control, building energy efficiencies, and healthier food production – all of which also reduce air pollution directly or indirectly.**

The Urban Health Initiative, meanwhile, is formulating scenarios for reducing air pollution-related deaths as well as deaths from injuries and other urban hazards simultaneously.

As part of the Megacities Partnership, Ghana EPA has just announced a new air quality management plan for the broader Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA). As a concrete measure, new low cost air quality monitors, funded by USEPA, are being installed in city hot spots, to be followed by an even bigger investment in state-of-art monitors, supported by the World Bank.

“Air pollution is a major health problem, particularly in cities, but so are other non-communicable diseases that stem from sedentary lifestyles. There are solutions available now that yield potential multiple benefits for human health. Ensuring that these are given due consideration involves giving the health sector the tools and capacity to quantify all co-benefits in ways that are meaningful to policy and personal decision-making processes,” said World Health Organization Ghana country representative, Dr Owen Kaluwa.

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FOR: METRO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

