

Obama visit to Ghana, what it means for Civil Society in Africa.

Feature Article : "The Author's/Authors' views do not necessarily reflect those of ModernGhana.

The President of United States of America, Barack Obama will make a historic visit to Ghana between July 10 – July 11, 2009.



According to Ghana's Foreign Ministry, the first Black US President will hold bilateral talks with Ghanaian President, John Evans Atta Mills aimed at strengthening the fraternal relations existing between the two countries.

The visit to be the first trip to the African continent by President Obama and wife Michelle Obama since assumption of office will be symbolic to advance the strategic role Ghana has grown to play on the world stage.

It is an indication of strong democratic governance and freedom that thrives in the fibre of Ghanaian society. It is also a manifestation of the fundamental role that governments and non-governmental organizations have played in moulding Ghana as a success story on the African continent.

Ghana should however take the opportunity of getting the first African-American President personally aware of the most challenging issues confronting the nation and the African continent. It is important that, we make clear cut statements with our needs with specific time frame and budget to achieving such goals. Simply asking for support without plan action and budget will be like making noise in the ears of the US President.

For those of us in the civil society and especially campaigning for Malaria Eradication in Ghana and Africa, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, has indicated that President Obama will highlight critical role that "good governance and civil society play in promoting development" and this affords us an opportunity to make our voice heard by requesting for new and refreshing strategy in tackling malaria through the President Malaria Initiative (PMI) by the United States. It is estimated that, Ghana alone will be receiving a \$ 17million grant this year from PMI towards malaria projects and it is time we call for proper utilitarian of the US tax payer's money on malaria in Ghana and Africa while urging African governments to take lead by adopting policies that is geared towards eradication of the disease which kills 1 person every 2 hours on average in Ghana and 2 people per minute globally with 90% of this deaths occurring in black Africa.

It is instructive to point to the US President whose authority, the PMI is been managed to consider adopting strategies that his country used after the second world war in eradicating the disease also on the African continent rather than going the conventional ways which has failed over the years hence an increase in Malaria deaths for instance in 2007 in Ghana according to the WHO.

In this vain, Ghana should take lead as it has always done in difficult times of the African continent to move from policies of controlling the disease to policies of eradicating the disease since it is that which will propel a change in donor rules of controlling the disease which has failed and continues to fail to a more compelling policy to eradicate it.

Ghana should therefore immediately call for a holistic approach in eradicating the disease by investing in treating people with existing malaria parasite, conduct aerial insecticide dispersal and embark on intensive public education.

This should help Ghana to eradicate the disease within 3 years.

Hayford Siaw
Executive Director
Volunteer Partnerships for West Africa(VPWA)
info@vpwa.org
www.vpwa.org
+233 24 3340112

Source: Hayford Siaw