

Speech: DFID Ghana Country Director's speech at Business Cost of Violence Against Women & Girls in Ghana forum

Honourable Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection Distinguished representatives of Government British High Commissioner for Ghana, Members of the Diplomatic Corps Development Partners, academia, representatives of the private sector Traditional leaders, Members of the press. Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon.

It's great to be here today at the British High Commissioner's Residence to mark the 16 Days of Activism towards ending gender based violence and to launch preliminary findings from the UK aid-funded study on the "Business Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls in Ghana".

35% of women across the world have experienced some form of violence in their lives.

As well as a gross violation in itself, Violence Against Women and Girls also limits individuals, communities and societies.

Girls and women who experience violence are less likely to complete their education, 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, and are at increased risk of maternal mortality.

For children that see one parent assaulting another, the long-term health and social consequences are similar to those of child abuse and neglect.

For economies, the costs of VAWG are estimated at between 1.2% and 3.7% of GDP. And we will hear more later from Dr Asante and his team on how Violence Against Women impacts on the economy.

In short, violence against women and girls is a global pandemic.

But while the scale of the problem seems daunting, change is possible and is already happening. This year's 16 Days of Activism is occurring at a time when across the world men and women are standing up to address the issue of violence against women.

The #MeToo movement has gone viral. The hashtag has been used by more than 4.7 million people in 12 million posts. It has trended in at least 85 countries. For too long, violence against women, including sexual harassment and assault, has been unspoken, private, something to be ashamed of. This campaign has succeeded in breaking the silence – providing us with a real sense of the magnitude, and the shocking scale and reach of the phenomenon in both public and private spheres across the world.

And it has opened up a global conversation about men's behaviour towards women.

Ladies and Gentlemen The UK is proud to be a global leader in efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls in all its forms. This includes support to women's rights organisations; tackling the attitudes that make violent behaviour seem normal; getting comprehensive services to those who have experienced violence; and ensuring that national legislation and policies are in place and implemented.

DFID currently works across 12 countries – including Ghana – to tackle Child Early and Forced Marriage – a £39m programme funded by the UK taxpayer. We continue to build on the momentum of the 2014 Girl Summit by supporting new international resolutions on Child Marriage.

The UK also provided financial and technical support to government for the 2016 Domestic Violence in Ghana Survey.

Our new Secretary of State announced last week a £12 million package to help around 750,000 women and girls globally over the next three years.

Studies reveal that in Ghana VAWG is deep-rooted and widespread. We know from a UK aid funded Domestic Violence in Ghana survey that an estimated 71.5% of women and 71.4% of men reported having experienced at least one form of violence (domestic and non-domestic) over their lifetime. A number of other harmful traditional practices still exist in Ghana, including female ritual slavery, FGM, Child Early Forced Marriage, widowhood rites and witch's camps.

We appreciate that the Government, under the leadership of the Honourable Minister, is actively addressing these challenges – through the work of the Domestic Violence Secretariat, and ongoing reforms are being put in place to tackle violence against women. For example, laws have been passed on inheritance rights, FGM, the Children's Act (1998), Human Trafficking Act (2005), Domestic Violence Act (2007).

I mentioned earlier the UK's global lead in efforts to address VAWG.

Ghana could also be a global leader on this issue. In the past week His Excellency the President has passionately espoused the need for African countries to grow "beyond aid". The President is championing gender equality and ensured that women are represented at the very highest levels in his government with 29 female parliamentarians and 20 female Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

The President is also the AU Gender Champion and Co-chair of Advocates for the SDGs.

Ghana, as it prepares to organise a Girls' Summit in 2018, could take a leadership role in addressing VAWG across the region, if not the continent. The UK stands ready to support this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today, the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) – University of Ghana – will present preliminary findings from a survey conducted among 100 businesses in Ghana assessing how domestic violence impacts businesses.

The UK aid-funded research looking at the Economic and Social Costs of Violence against Women and Girls is a three year multi-country project that estimates the costs of violence, both social and economic, to individuals and households, businesses and communities in Ghana, Pakistan and South Sudan. As we stand here this afternoon, people are similarly gathered – but in a much colder London – to launch the findings from South Sudan.

No such analysis has previously been carried out in Ghana, or indeed elsewhere in West Africa. The impact of the Ghana study, once assessed, is therefore likely to be significant – with the new data helping us better understand the impact of Violence Against Women on community cohesion, economic stability and development and providing further evidence for government to accelerate efforts to address Violence Against Women.

Before I hand over to the Honourable Minister to say a few words, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister for agreeing to assume the Chairmanship of the National Advisory Board (NAB) – the body which will ensure that the research is used effectively to advocate for increased resources and emphasis on the elimination of violence against women in Ghana.

In conclusion, I'd like us all to remain alert to the fact that VAWG is present in our homes and our work places. With the #MeToo movement in mind, let us create opportunities to break the silence, opened up a conversation about men's behaviour towards women, and be bold for change in order to end the violence.

I'd now like to introduce the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection – Honourable Otiko Afisa Djaba.

Thank You.

[Press release: CMA examines heat networks](#)

Heat networks – systems that heat multiple homes from one central source – currently supply about half a million UK homes through about 17,000 networks.

They can also be more environmentally friendly than some other sources of heat, delivering lower carbon emissions and resulting in cost benefits to households.

As a result, heat networks form an important part of government strategy to reduce carbon and cut heating bills. The number of customers using heat networks is expected to grow significantly to around 20% of all households by 2030.

Whilst heat networks may have these wider benefits, the sector is not currently subject to the same regulation as other forms of energy supply such as mains gas and electricity.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is concerned that many customers, a large proportion of whom live in social housing, may be unable to easily switch suppliers or are locked into very long contracts – some for up to 25 years – and that there is a risk they may be paying too much or receiving a poor quality of service.

It will now be thoroughly examining a range of potential issues in a new market study into the sector.

The CMA is planning to examine 3 broad themes:

- Whether customers are aware of the costs of heat networks both before and after moving into a property.
- Whether heat networks are natural monopolies and the impact of differing incentives for builders, operators and customers of heat networks.
- The prices, service quality and reliability of heat networks.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive, said:

Heat networks can play an important role in cutting carbon and keeping down energy bills for customers.

However, we have concerns that this sector may not be working as well as it could be for the half a million homes heated by these systems now and the millions that may be connected in the future.

That is why we're taking a closer look at this market to ensure that heat network customers get a good deal on their energy now and in the future.

The CMA will complete [its study](#) within the next 12 months. Evidence will be gathered from a wide range of stakeholders, including heat network builders and operators, other government departments, local authorities, sector regulators and consumer groups.

An interim report, with the CMA's initial findings and views on potential remedies, will be produced within the next 6 months, ahead of the final report. Where issues of particular concern are found the CMA may take further action during or after the end of the 12-month market study, such as opening consumer or competition enforcement cases or launching a full market investigation.

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated

industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.

2. Market studies may lead to a range of outcomes, including:

- a clean bill of health;
- actions which improve the quality and accessibility of information to consumers;
- encouraging businesses in the market to self-regulate;
- making recommendations to the government to change regulations or public policy;
- taking competition or consumer law enforcement action; and
- making a reference for a more in-depth market investigation, or accepting formal undertakings in lieu of a reference.

3. Heat networks involve the generation and distribution of heat to buildings and consist of district heating and communal heating. District heating comprises a network of insulated pipes used to deliver heat, in the form of hot water or steam, or cooling from the point of generation to an end user. Networks vary in size and length, carrying heat from just a few hundred metres between homes and flats, to several kilometres supplying entire communities and industrial areas. In comparison, communal heating systems generally serve one building with multiple occupants, such as a block of flats.

4. The CMA would welcome views on any of the issues raised in the Statement of Scope, which has also been published today. Views should be sent to heatnetworks@cma.gsi.gov.uk by no later than 5pm on 12 January 2018.

5. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or call 020 3738 6191.

[News story: Results of first survey of thousands of heat network consumers](#)

The government has today published the findings of the [first survey of heat network consumers](#). It asked about their satisfaction with their heating system, price and transparency of billing, and customer service.

A heat network takes heat from a central source and delivers it to a number of buildings. There are around 17,000 heat networks in the UK, with some of the largest networks at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London, Sheffield and Nottingham.

Expansion of the heat networks market is a key part of the government's [Clean Growth Strategy](#), but strong consumer protections are needed to ensure that

customers can be confident in their heating supply as the market develops.

Our survey was carried out by independent researchers between April and July 2017 and received over 5,000 responses. The survey results suggested that, while there was significant variation in the prices paid by heat network consumers, on average they were likely to pay less than non-heat network consumers.

The survey also shows that while there are issues affecting the sector that need addressing, heat network consumers were just as satisfied overall with their heating systems as non-heat network consumers.

Consumers on [Heat Trust](#) registered schemes (the voluntary industry-led consumer protection scheme) in general received more comprehensive billing information, and service interruptions tended to be rectified quicker, in line with the Heat Trust's service standards.

Claire Perry, Minister for Climate Change and Industry said:

As we set out in our Clean Growth Strategy, encouraging the uptake of heat networks is an important way to reduce carbon and cut heating bills for customers.

This survey of consumers provides an important evidence base as we seek to expand the use of heat networks from now to 2021.

The projects that the government supports through the [Heat Network Investment Project](#) must meet Heat Trust equivalent standards, comparable to those provided to customers of gas and electricity, as well as meet minimum technical standards in terms of performance and efficiency of systems. Membership of these schemes is voluntary for existing heat networks.

The government will feed in the results of the survey to the Competition and Markets Authority which announced today that it is carrying out a market study into the heat networks sector. The heat networks industry is also developing proposals to protect consumers and lower risk for investors which will be published in 2018.

[News story: Christmas drink drive campaign uses friends' influence to help save lives](#)

Tell your friends not to drink drive this festive period – says latest THINK! campaign starting today (7 December 2017).

For this year's campaign, which runs to January 1 (2018), THINK! has teamed up with Kiss FM duo Rickie and Melvin, who will be urging young adults to encourage their friends not to get behind the wheel after drinking.

The radio presenters will also front videos for Kiss FM's social media channels, with its audience almost a third more likely than the average person to enjoy a night out in a pub.

A further radio advert, which will run in England and Wales, uses the message "mates don't let mates drink and drive", playing on the fact friends will say anything to each other, except to stop them from drink driving.

Road Safety Minister Jesse Norman said:

Driving even while below the legal limit is becoming increasingly socially unacceptable, with more and more people choosing to turn down drinking any alcohol when they plan to drive. But even so there are still some drivers who are willing to take the risk.

Friends, colleagues and family members can positively influence those around them. So we are calling on them to stop potential drink drivers from getting behind the wheel and risking tragedy this Christmas.

Rickie Haywood Williams said:

We feel we owe it to our audience to share such an important message. Me and Melv grew up together, we look out for each other and we want to spread the word to our listeners to do the same.

Melvin Odoom continued:

Rickie will always be there for me on a night out and vice versa. Drink driving awareness is something that needs to be out in front at all times. The campaign is designed to shine a light on the issue and we want to help us much as we can to stop people making the wrong decision.

Police forces across England and Wales are also taking part in enforcement action throughout December and on January 1.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Roads Policing, Chief Constable Anthony Bangham said:

Every year police forces deal with cases of drink or drug driving that directly result in families facing Christmas without loved ones. Even a small amount of alcohol or drugs in your system can

affect your ability to drive safely – don't let your friends and family pay the price.

Police forces are running targeted operations across the country to enforce the law on drink and drug driving: you can face an unlimited fine, disqualification for driving, and a long prison sentence.

In October, it was the 50th anniversary of the breathalyser test. Last December (2016), 89,138 motorists were tested and 5,869 were found to be over the drink drive limit.

In England last year, more than half of car drivers who were involved in a crash and failed a breath test were aged up to 34.

THINK! has also teamed up with a number of partners including Arriva Buses, which is offering free bus journeys to either home or work the morning after a night out, and Budweiser, which is launching a new alcohol-free beer to coincide with the campaign.

LADbible will also be creating videos for its social media channel and Diageo will be marking the 5 millionth person to sign up to its drink drive pledge.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is also promoting its cold water shock film, which delivers a hard-hitting message designed to make people think twice before entering the water. Coastguard statistics reveal that on average around 50 people die of alcohol-related drowning around the coast of the UK each year. Of these, a significant percentage are young men who end up in the water as they make their way home.

Network Rail, British Transport Police and Rail Safety Standards Board will also be launching an alcohol awareness campaign next week reminding the public to "keep a clear head" when they are around the railway. The organisations will also be targeting Christmas revellers at the busiest railway stations as well as in pubs and clubs located near railways stations and level crossings.

[News story: Nortrader report and flyer published](#)

MAIB's report on 2 explosions of gas released from a cargo of unprocessed incinerator bottom ash on Nortrader while at anchorage in Plymouth Sound on 13 January 2017 is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, subsequent actions taken and

recommendations: [read more](#).

A [safety flyer for the shipping industry](#) summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned has also been produced.

Press enquiries

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