

# Perennial Problem of Floods in Accra: What is The Way Forward?

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## Abstract

Ghanaians have been receiving baptism of floods on a continuing basis annually, particularly the inhabitants of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Floods are natural occurrences and natural occurrences may be disastrous and uncontrollable as well as inevitable. Precious souls have been lost as a result of floods in Accra. Over one hundred and fifty (150) people have just lost their lives in June 2015. The perennial problem of flood disaster in Accra is as old as Methuselah that can be traced as far back from 1959. This paper seeks to discuss four main causes of floods in Accra metropolis such as negligence/ignorance or sheer megalomania, poor planning of the city, building on waterways and indiscriminate disposal of waste material and what can be done now to avoid disaster particularly floods in Accra. Four major chronological approaches like godly approach, attitudinal approach, technological/scientific approach and governmental approach will be stressed and argued to be the panacea to the perennial problem of floods in Accra.

## Keywords

Negligence, Indiscriminate, Godly, Attitudinal, Technological And Governmental

## I. Introduction

*“The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ...*

*The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matthew 7:25-27)*

This write-up seeks to give background study of floods from 1959 to 2015 in Accra, discuss four main causes of floods in Accra metropolis such as negligence/ignorance or sheer megalomania, poor planning of the city, building on waterways and indiscriminate disposal of waste material and what can be done now to avoid disaster particularly floods in Accra. Four major chronological approaches like godly approach, attitudinal approach, technological/scientific approach and governmental approach will be suggested and argued to be the panacea to the perennial problem of floods in Accra.

## The Background Study of Floods Disaster in Accra From 1959 To 2015

Dates	Areas Affected	Destruction Of Properties/ Repercussions	Death (Loss Of Lives)
June 1959	The whole city	Normal life became standstill, offices, shops closed down, school children playing hooky/ truancy and taking French leave	No death
July, 4 1968	The whole city	The same repercussions	No death

July 5, 1995	Low areas	Commuters, vehicles, Achimota VRA substation leading to power cuts and submerged Tema Treatment Plant	Claimed 30 lives
June 13, 1997	The whole city	Roads affected, Odaw and Onyasia Rivers appeared on the brink of breaking their banks, people deserted their homes for higher grounds and became homeless	No death
June 28, 2001	Submerged numerous houses and structures at Madina, Achimota, Dzorwulu, Avenor, Santa- Maria and Adabraka Official Town	Residents became homeless and properties destroyed	11 people died
May 5, 2010	Central Accra, Ofankor and Begoro(not in Accra)	Streets and properties submerged in water.	35 bodies discovered.
February 24, 2011	Adabraka, Kisseman, Alajo Junction, A-Lang at Santa Maria, Oyarifa, Haatso, Adenta and Tema Timber Market	Properties washed away Residents became homeless	No death

Nov. 1, 2011	The whole city	43,087 people were affected, rendering many of them homeless	14 people perished
May 31, 2013	Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Darkuman Kokompe, the Obetsebi Lamptey Circle and portions of the Graphic Road, Santa Maria and the Dansoman Roundabout	Properties washed away People became homeless	No death
June 6, 2014	Adabraka, Awoshie, the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Mallam, North Kaneshie, Abeka, Dansoman and Odorkor	Properties washed away People became homeless	No death
July 4, 2014	Anyaa, Taifa, Dome, Nii Boi Town, Dansoman, some parts of Kaneshie, Adabraka, Awoshie, the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Mallam, Abeka, Dansoman and Odorkor	Properties washed away People became homeless	No death
June 3, 2015	Kwame Nkrumah circle, Old Fadama, Ofankor, Bubuashie, GREDA estate, Kaneshie First Light, Mallam Junction, Tetteh Quarshie roundabout, Teshie Nungua and Tesano	Valuable properties washed away People became maimed and homeless	Over 150 people died

Gyau-Boakye, P., Adinku, S.A., (1997); *Daily Graphic*, June 2015

### Research Questions

The objectives will be attained by answering the following questions:

1. What are the three main causes of floods in Accra?
2. How could we solve floods disaster in Ghana, particularly Accra?
3. What must the people of Accra do now to eradicate floods' disaster?
4. What are the roles the Government of Ghana must play now to solve this perennial problem?

5. Can we ascribe causes of floods in Accra to the activities of the devil?
6. What godly or religious actions must religious leaders adopt to avert floods disaster in Ghana?

### Causes of floods in Accra

#### Negligence or sheer megalomania

Without any hesitation of fear one can say that Accra as a city is not properly planned and structured in terms of demarcations of roads, drainage systems as well as haphazardly selling and buying of lands for residential purposes due to either negligence/ignorance or sheer megalomania. The explosion of the Goil Filling station as a result of flood, couldn't it be averted, when people started smelling fuel? A similar incidence just happened at Tema Total Filling station, when the Operatives of the National Security Council Secretariat, perceived that there was a major leakage on one of the hoses of the pumps, *Daily Graphic* (Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2015) reported, barely five days after the wailing and weeping in Ghana.

#### Building on watercourses/ways

Where did these people get their building permits to build on waterways/courses? Who sold out the water ways to the people and gave them the building permits to put up residential structures? Did the people embark on any research at the Lands Commission to ascertain the veracity of the lands bought before building? Poor planning of the city of Accra has led to untold hardship and loss of lives. In other words, poor planning usually contributes to flooding in urban centres (Diop, 2000)

#### Indiscriminate Disposal of Waste Material

Perennial problem of litter in Accra leads to perennial problem of floods.

One day, I boarded a taxi from Mallam station to Djaman, a suburb of Accra and after drinking pure water, I left the empty sachet in the taxi. Immediately the driver saw me, he became very furious and told me to throw the empty sachet onto the lorry station simply because there were people who were supposed to sweep the lorry park daily. I also became furious with him for telling me to pick the sachet from the taxi and tried to explain to him that littering is unlawful and that even made him inflamed and expressed an extreme annoyance; I was so disappointed about the behaviour of this taxi driver and to allow peace to prevail, I decided to get off. The highest percentage of litters in Accra can be attributed to commercial vehicle drivers, particularly trotro drivers. All commercial vehicle drivers are to inform passengers to leave all waste materials in their vehicles or litter bin without throwing things outside or onto the streets.

### Solutions to perennial problem of floods in Accra/the way forward

The question all and sundry must answer now is what can be done now to deal with this evil canker in Accra that has just claimed over 150 lives? By adhering religiously to the following chronological approaches will enable the people of Ghana particularly Accra Metropolitan Assembly to call the perennial problem of floods a thing of the past. It takes a change of approach to do away with one's reproach.

#### Godly/religious approach

From idealist and Christian point of view nothing happens in

vacuum(without a spiritual force) as opposes to materialism (the philosophical theory that physical matter is the only reality and that psychological states such as emotions, reason, thought, and desire will eventually be explained as physical functions(Encarta,2009). Professor Atta Britwum (2006) calls idealism as *une image mentale (mental image)*. The disaster that occurred on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2015 can have two school of thoughts. All believers/Christians may attribute the occurrence to evil force or give it spiritual dimension or connotation simply because “man is a spirit, he has a soul and lives in a body” and for that reason nothing happens physical without first occurring in the spiritual realm which stresses idealism while another school of thought will say the disaster was purely due to human activities (physical or natural phenomenon) coupled with human negligence or ignorance (materialism). As a lot of Ghanaians are believers/Christians it behooves everybody to pray to God to have mercy on Ghana and save the country from future occurrence. All religious leaders must therefore have a prayer and fasting week yearly in the months of May, June and July to combat floods in Accra and not to wait till disaster crops up. It is not scriptural and necessary to pray for the dead. If we have any prayer to pray let’s pray for the living now. The LORD Jesus said, “Watch and pray so that you will not enter temptation” Christians ought to pray consistently and persistently so that Accra will not experience perennial problem of floods. Apostle Paul also strengthens the Christian philosophy of prayer in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 as follows,

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.*

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds”*

#### **Attitudinal change/approach**

*“Je pense donc je suis” (Descartes, 1637), meaning I think therefore I am.*

For real transformation to occur, Ghanaians have to change their thinking pattern, particularly, our attitude towards acquisition of properties, buying and selling, disposal of refuse and proper planning of the city of Accra by the Town and Country Planning Department as well as not depending on any political party or Government to be a solution to all the social and economic ills. No one can be above how he or she thinks and without proper thinking one will perpetually live in misery. In short, let all Ghanaians ask themselves, what can be done now to find a lasting solution to the perennial problem of floods in Accra?

#### **Technological/scientific approach**

Why can’t we fall on all the countless engineers, hydro-geologists and hydrologists we have in our Universities? Ghana should make judicious use of research works and findings and not to dump the findings somewhere in our Universities. For instance, using hydroCAD (Computer Aided Design) for modeling hydrology and hydraulics of storm water runoff can help engineers greatly to verify that a given drainage system is adequate for the area under consideration, or to predict where flooding or erosion is likely to occur (, www.hydrocad.net (2012) and Danquah, 2013).

#### **Flood forecasting (prediction/foretelling)**

Without relying on meteorologists in the country, through simple analogy and inference, we can deduce that every year between May and July Accra receives the baptism of torrential rainfall that is devastating and destructive to mankind and properties. We

should therefore take precaution accordingly. It is highly advisable for all prospective buyers of lands and properties to wait till rainy seasons before entering into any transaction so as to uncover flood prone areas in Accra.

#### **Political approach (Governmental approach)**

What must the ruling Government do now to solve this perennial problem bedeviling Ghana, particularly in Accra metropolis, once and for all?

It would be expedient for the Government to demolish all the structures on waterways without delay.

It is equally incumbent upon the Government to order the Town and Country Planning Department to embark on proper planning of the city of Accra immediately.

Additionally, the Operatives of the National Security Council Secretariat can deploy all their taskforces to carry out at least a weekly search to close down all filling stations in the country that will be found that their hoses leak without compromising and conniving with them.

#### **Conclusion**

We have to agree with President John Mahama (June 2015) that “Drastic steps are necessary if we are to permanently address this perennial problem...”

The annual vulnerability and inevitability of Accra Metropolis to floods can be curtailed if all hands are on deck. Let us do away with parochialism, self-aggrandizement, negligence, indiscriminate disposal of waste and adopt chronological, pragmatic and practical approaches such as godly approach, attitudinal approach, technological/scientific approach as well as governmental approach to combat perennial problem of floods in Accra.

May the God of all comfort and mercies save Ghana and comfort all those who have lost their loved ones and properties.

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## Author's Profile



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