

**STATEMENT AT A PRESS BRIEFING ON THE RISING BURDEN OF KIDNEY  
DISEASE AND THE URGENT NEED FOR A FRONT-OF-PACK WARNING  
LABELLING (FOPWL) POLICY**

**Accra, Ghana | 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

***Press briefing on the rising burden of kidney disease and the role of Ghana's  
food environment***

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the press. Thank you for joining us.

We stand before you today because Ghana is facing a quiet but dangerous public health crisis, one that is already touching millions of lives and draining household and national resources. Kidney disease is on the rise, and unless we act decisively, its impact will deepen across families, communities, and our health system.

We, SEND GHANA, the Ghana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Vision for Accelerated Sustainable Development, are here today to draw attention to a growing public health concern in Ghana and send an alarm – our current food environment is making Ghanaians sick, and we must urgently empower people with clear information to protect their health.

Recent figures shared by the Minister for Health in Parliament and reported across several media platforms indicate that *‘over 4 million people, are living with chronic kidney disease’*. Medical experts have also alerted *that around 400 new cases of end-stage kidney diseases are reported at health facilities yearly.* These are not just numbers; they point to a challenge that is already affecting many families across the country. These are not isolated cases – they reflect systemic exposure to preventable risk factors that continue to shape disease patterns across the population.

Chronic kidney disease progresses silently. Many people remain undiagnosed until the disease reaches advanced stages. At that point, treatment becomes complex and expensive. Dialysis and kidney transplantation remain inaccessible

for most Ghanaians due to high costs. Health facilities face increasing pressure, while households face financial hardship. This trend places a growing burden on the health system and threatens national productivity.

While smoking and excessive alcohol consumption use are known risk factors, one major contributor that deserves closer public attention is our food environment. Across Ghana, ultra-processed foods such as instant noodles, energy drinks, sugary drinks, highly processed chips, and biscuits are becoming increasingly common. They are in our markets, provisions or grocery stores, offices, homes and even in our schools. They are being sold to our children as snacks. They are cheap, convenient, and require little or no preparation, making them an easy choice for many people with busy schedules and even limited resources.

However, this convenience comes at a cost. These foods are often high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats but low in essential nutrients. Frequent consumption increases the risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and stroke, placing significant strain on the kidneys and raising the risk of chronic kidney disease. A major challenge is the lack of awareness about what people consume and its health impacts. Many products, particularly sugar-sweetened beverages marketed to children, lack adequate nutrition labelling. According to the WHO, noncommunicable diseases now account for approximately 45% of deaths in Ghana, and the trend is rising.

The reality is that we are emptying our pockets for foods that are slowly damaging our health, only to spend even more seeking treatment we often cannot afford. Kidney diseases and other NCDs are eroding income accumulated over years, destroying livelihoods and threatening the future of our children.

Similarly, the Government is compelled to spend more to provide healthcare to its people. As we all are aware, last year, the President launched the Ghana

Medical Trust Fund (MahamaCares) to support specialist-level treatment for a wide range of chronic illnesses including chronic kidney failure, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases. And to which Parliament approved GH¢2.9 billion in February for the fund in 2026 alone. These are resources that could otherwise be used to support productive sectors of the economy. This is why we are urgently calling on the government to accelerate the introduction of a mandatory Front-of-Pack Warning Food Labelling (FOPWL) policy in Ghana.

Front-of-Pack Warning Labelling policy offers a direct and evidence-based solution. This policy places clear warning symbols on ultra processed products that exceed defined thresholds for salt, sugar, unhealthy fats non sugar sweeteners, and other nutrients of public health concern. These labels provide immediate and visible information. They allow consumers to identify unhealthy products quickly and make better choices.

Unlike back-of-pack nutrition panels which are often technical, printed in small fonts, or written in foreign languages, FOPWL gives consumers instant, easy-to-understand information at a glance. It simplifies decision-making in real time, especially in busy settings like markets or shops, where people may not have the time to read through detailed labels. With this kind of clear information, consumers are better able to weigh their options and choose what best fits their needs. Thus, before a shopper even turns a product around, they already know what they are buying.

Evidence from countries that have implemented such policies, including Chile and Mexico, shows that FoPWL symbols can lead to reduced consumption of unhealthy foods. On the African continent, South Africa has taken the lead, others including Nigeria and Kenya are all developing FOPWL policies.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ghanaians have the right to know what is in the food they consume. And more importantly, we should be able to understand it easily and

quickly at the point of purchase. This is not about banning food products or harming producers. It is about giving people the information they need to make decisions for themselves and their families.

The urgency of this policy cannot be overstated. Ghana is already experiencing a rise in diet-related non-communicable diseases. Without decisive action, the number of people living with kidney disease will continue to increase. The current trajectory will strain the National Health Insurance Scheme, the MahamaCares and undermine efforts toward universal health coverage. Prevention must become a central pillar of the national response.

As a country, we must do whatever is possible to shift from reacting to diseases to preventing them. Addressing our food environment is a critical part of that effort.

Ghana is already on the right path. The Ministry of Health is currently working to develop the FOPWL policy, and we commend the government for this effort.

We make a passionate appeal to the Minister of Health, Hon. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh to own and champion this policy's birth and implementation.

We call on the media to play a critical role in this process by providing accurate and consistent reporting on the risks associated with unhealthy diets, raising public awareness, increasing demand for healthier food options, and strengthening accountability.

We urge our lawmakers, policymakers, civil society, academia and the public to support the introduction of a FOPWL policy as a practical step toward improving public health outcomes in Ghana.

If we act now, we can protect our health, our economy, and our future.

It will save our lives, save us millions of monies and save our future.

Thank you very much for your attention.