

A portrait of a Black woman with short, dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a light-colored, button-down shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

The Launch Ghana Didn't Notice:

Why Our Mothers' Mental Health Silence Is Deafening

By: Deborah Asmah

THE LAUNCH GHANA DIDN'T NOTICE: **WHY OUR MOTHERS' MENTAL HEALTH SILENCE IS DEAFENING**

I grew up believing mental illness was about the man on the street talking to himself, or the woman in the local film who “went mad” after heartbreak. My friends and I would make the sign of the cross when we passed certain people. We were warned away from weed and traditional healers with equal fervor. Mental health was them, never us!

Life, as it does, taught me differently.

As a child who battled multiple health conditions and endured teasing, I experienced moments where my thoughts turned dark and cloudy. But I had no name for those feelings. No adult around me had the language. No teacher mentioned it. No doctor asked.

My fascination with mental health deepened the year I became pregnant for the first time.

Let me be clear: **everything you've heard about the mental and emotional toll of pregnancy and childbirth is probably true.** After delivering my first child, I learned through my own desperate research that something called “pre and postnatal depression” existed. Not from my hospital. Not from my midwife. Not from my doctor. From Google, in the dark hours when I couldn't understand why joy felt like drowning.

That's when I realized: mental health wasn't just about the “abodam” on the street or drug abuse. **It was in my bedroom. In the nursery. In thousands of homes across Ghana where pregnant women and new mothers suffered silently because no one, not even our healthcare system acknowledged what was happening.**

A 2024 policy brief jointly published by the Ghana Health Service, the Ministry of Health, and the World Health Organization found that two decades of research in Ghana consistently document perinatal depression prevalence of up to 50.1%, with suicidal ideation reported in 13 to 17% of affected mothers (Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Health & WHO, 2024).



MARCH 31, 2026: A POLICY REVOLUTION IN A QUIET ROOM

Fast forward to this year. Through my non-profit Jubilare Group, I decided our 2026 focus would be maternal mental health. I'm in tech, not healthcare, but I have something more valuable: lived experience and a refusal to accept that nothing can change. Imagine my excitement when I discovered that the World Health Organization and Ghana's Ministry of Health were working on a landmark **Maternal Mental Health Policy (MMHP)**, the first of its kind in our nation's history. A policy that would finally integrate mental health screening into maternal care.

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A policy that would acknowledge what mothers have known forever: the mind needs care as much as the body. A policy that would acknowledge what mothers have known forever: **the mind needs care as much as the body.**

I told myself, **"This is the time."**

On March 31, 2026, I sat in the hall at Alisa Hotel witnessing something extraordinary: the launch of Ghana's first-ever Maternal Mental Health Policy. The Minister's rep spoke. Experts presented evidence. History unfolded quietly.

And then it hit me: most of Ghana had no idea this was happening.

This was a once-in-a-generation policy shift, the kind that changes lives, saves mothers, strengthens families. Yet somehow, in the rush of our daily lives, this moment slipped past most of us.



HOW MANY GHANAIAN WOMEN KNOW THIS JUST HAPPENED TO THEM? FOR

This isn't about who showed up to the launch. It is about the thousands of mothers across Ghana who woke up that day, struggled in silence, and went to bed not knowing that help was on its way.

The policy exists now. The framework is built. The experts are ready.

Every woman in Ghana, every family, deserves to know this historic shift just happened. This is the gap we need to close together."

THE CONTRADICTION THAT HAUNTS ME

Here's what I can't reconcile:

In a country where women are the majority. Where Mother's Day generates more social media posts than any other holiday. Where breast cancer awareness month sees pink everywhere; on buildings, in boardrooms, across corporate campaigns. Where "celebrating women" is an annual ritual...

...we launched a policy that could save thousands of mothers' lives and barely anyone noticed.

**NOT BECAUSE THE POLICY ISN'T
IMPORTANT. NOT BECAUSE
MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH
DOESN'T MATTER.**

What's missing is the awareness. The conversation. The collective decision that this matters as much as anything else we celebrate.

Think about that. We celebrate mothers one day a year with media hype and discounts and restaurant hopping. But when a policy arrives that could prevent mothers from suffering in silence, from being unable to bond with their babies, from contemplating ending their own lives we as a people have not caught on yet.

WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT US?

WHAT WE'RE REALLY SAYING WHEN WE STAY SILENT

Securing corporate sponsorships for Jubilate's maternal mental health campaign has been a revealing process. I've engaged banks, telecom companies, and consumer goods manufacturers. Organizations that champion 'women's empowerment' in their messaging. The conversations have been varied: some committed, others are still deliberating, and a few have yet to respond.

Here's what I learned: **We love health initiatives we can see.** Cancer screenings. Blood pressure checks. Vaccination drives. These get funding, media coverage, and corporate backing because the solutions feel tangible.

But mental health? **That requires us to admit that the mind can break just like the body.** That the woman smiling in the Mother's Day photoshoot might be drowning inside. That the "strong Ghanaian woman" narrative we've built is sometimes a cage.

And we're not comfortable with that admission yet.



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So when the **Ministry of Health and Mental Health Authority** achieve something monumental integrating mental health screening into maternal care for the first time in Ghana's history, it happens quietly. Almost apologetically. As if we're still not sure mental health deserves a seat at the table.

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

Let me make this personal.



If you are a parent:

Your child's emotional wellbeing is shaped by their primary caregivers. A mother struggling with untreated postnatal depression cannot provide the emotional attunement her baby needs. The impact isn't just on her, it's on the child's brain development, attachment patterns, and future mental health.



If you are a woman:

The stages of your reproductive life: menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause...all involve profound hormonal shifts that affect mental health. If we don't normalize talking about this, you will suffer alone when your turn comes.



If you are an employer:

Mental health directly impacts productivity. A new mother returning to work while battling untreated depression will struggle. Supporting her mental health isn't charity it's smart business.



If you are a man:

Your wife, sister, mother, daughter, colleague they will all navigate these stages. Your silence makes it harder for them to speak up.

This isn't a "women's issue." **This is a family issue. A workplace issue.** A national development issue.

Kudos to the Mental Health Authority of Ghana. Kudos to the Ministry of Health and Kudos to Ghana Health Services.

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WHAT HAPPENS NEXT DEPENDS ON ALL OF US

The Maternal Mental Health Policy is law now. It exists. **But a policy without implementation is just paper.**

Here's what needs to happen:



HOSPITALS:

Train your midwives and nurses to screen for mental health during antenatal visits. Make it as routine as checking blood pressure. Create referral pathways so mothers identified as at-risk actually get help.



MEDIA:

Cover this story. Write about it. Broadcast it. Make mental health as visible as breast cancer awareness. Give mothers permission to speak up by showing them they're not alone.



CORPORATES:

Put your CSR money where your Mother's Day posts are. Fund maternal mental health programs. Sponsor training for healthcare workers. Support organizations doing the work. Don't just celebrate women **support them when they're vulnerable.**



INDIVIDUALS:

Check on the new mothers in your life. Ask real questions. "How are you feeling emotionally?" not just "How's the baby?" Educate yourself on postnatal depression symptoms. Break the silence in your own circles.



GOVERNMENT:

The policy launch was historic. Now resource it. Fund its implementation. Make Ghana the African example of maternal mental health done right.

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MY COMMITMENT

Through Jubilare Group, we're not waiting for perfect conditions.

This year, we're partnering with hospitals to integrate mental health education and screening into maternal care. We're training healthcare workers to recognize symptoms and make referrals. We're building the infrastructure this policy needs to come alive.

We're doing it with limited resources, because we can't afford to wait until everyone understands why these matters.

But we shouldn't have to do it alone.

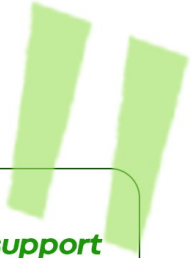
A QUESTION FOR EVERY READER

When you last saw a Mother's Day post, what did you feel? Pride? Love? Gratitude?

The policy exists. The need is urgent. The mothers are waiting.

This isn't about "them." This is about us. Your daughter. Your sister. Your mother. Your colleague. You.

This is our fight. Not theirs.
Learn more about Jubilare Group's 2026 Maternal Mental Health Campaign:
<https://jubilaregroupibg.com/jubilare-social-work/>



Now ask yourself:
Are you willing to support mothers when the cameras are off and the brunch is over?

Because here's the truth:
Celebrating women once a year while ignoring their mental health year-round isn't celebration. It's performance.

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