

BUILDING NUCLEAR FORENSIC SCIENCE CAPABILITY IN GHANA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

Forensic science is the application of sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, computer science and engineering to matters of law. Forensic science can help investigators understand how blood spatter patterns occur (physics), learn the composition and source of evidence such as drugs and trace materials (chemistry) or determine the identity of an unknown suspect (biology).

Forensics play key role in the criminal justice system by providing scientifically based information through the analysis of physical evidence.

Ghana achieved a middle income economic status and has a sharp increase in the incidence of crime over the past eight years. The government responded to this challenge by teaming up with international bodies to resource existing crime-combating laboratories and agencies to deal with the menace.

The Criminal Investigation Department of the Ghana Police Service, which operates The Forensic Science Laboratory received a grant of £3 Million funding from the European Union to refurbish the Laboratory and expand its capabilities into a State-of-the Art Facility. The Facility is an ultra-modern forensic laboratory, the first of its kind in West Africa. The Laboratory is located in Accra and serves all the 651 police stations across the 10 regions of Ghana.

Other forensic services including medico-legal pathology services have been provided to the Ghana Police Service by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), public hospitals and the Ghana Standards Authority which operates a special drugs, cosmetics and forensic laboratory.

In July 2012, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the CID and e-Crime Bureau Inc., a cybersecurity and e-crime investigation firm based in Accra, Ghana to train CID detectives and establish an e-Crime Lab at the CID Forensic Science Laboratory.

Following major advancements in forensic science within the past eight years in Ghana, forensic science education programs have been developed in some tertiary institutions to help train scientists in the field. The Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology was the first to start a Master of Science (MSc) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil.) in forensic science in the 2014/2015 academic year. The University of Cape Coast has also commenced a 4 year Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in forensic science, and The University of Ghana is in the process of acquiring accreditation to run master of science degree programme in Forensic Science. Plans are far advanced to start training students in the field of Nuclear Forensics at the University of Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority.

In spite of these advancements, myriad of challenges continue to plaque the forensic science sector in Ghana. This presentation will seek to shed light on the forensic science facilities, capabilities, challenges and the interventions made by stakeholders in fighting crime and promoting forensic science in Ghana.

Gender

Female

State

Ghana

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