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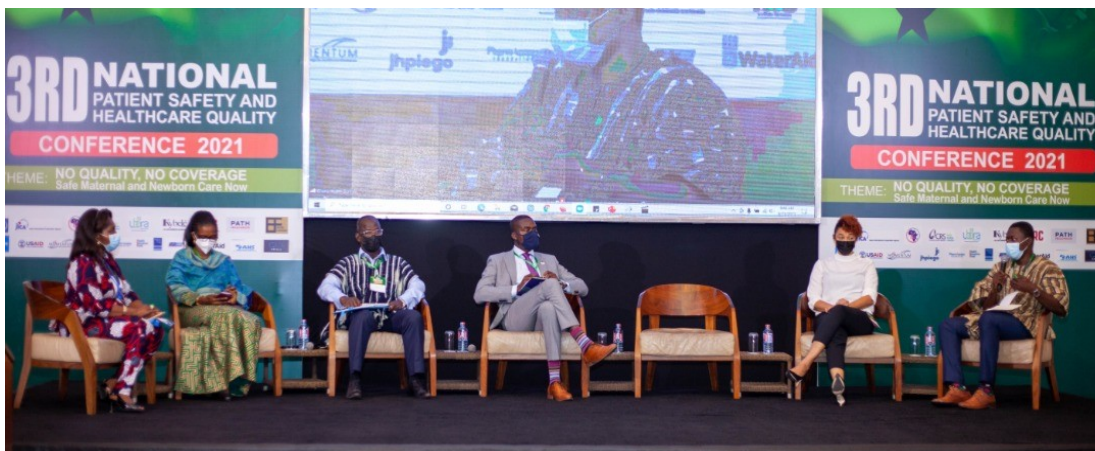


"Through our country offices, as WHO we have worked with Ministries of Health to design a bold, relevant and timely programme which will contribute to leaders being more focused on results, transparent, accountable and equipped to deliver on their mandate of improving population health."

Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa

#PathwaytoLeadershipforHealthTransformationProgramme

Partners call for safe maternal and newborn care on World Patient Safety Day



Stakeholders discussing Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn, Child Health

The Ministry of Health and partners have collectively called for safe maternal and newborn care in Ghana at the 3rd National Patient Safety and Healthcare Quality Conference in Accra. The conference, which culminated in the observation of the 2021 Patient Safety Day, was under the theme: “No Quality, No Coverage; Safe Maternal and Newborn Care Now”.

The 2021 conference, organized in partnership with Ghana’s Network for improving the Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, incorporated a National Learning Forum for Quality of Care. The platform provided the opportunity for point of care quality improvement teams to share knowledge of quality improvement works done to promote safe quality care aimed at reducing maternal and newborn morbidities and deaths.

In Ghana, about 80% of births occur in health facilities. In spite of this high coverage, maternal mortality and neonatal mortality remain high at 319 per 100,000 live births and 25 per 1000 live births respectively.

Dr Francis Kasolo, WHO Country Representative indicated that the statistics raised a red flag on the safety and quality of care received by mothers and their newborns, and stressed that harm to patients during health care is avoidable, yet millions of patients are harmed while receiving care. He

therefore, appealed to all stakeholders in health to make patient safety an urgent global public health concern since adding that “investments in reducing patient harm can lead to significant financial savings, improved system efficiency, and more importantly better patient outcomes”.

Mr Kwaku Agyeman, the Minister for health, said the Ministry was committed to high standards of patient safety as a component of quality, adding that, as the Government advanced in its Agenda 111, not only would it focus on coverage, but also quality.

He, however hinted that in recent years the number of cases of medical negligence were going up. This he said, was not just because patients and families were becoming conscious of their rights, but also because not much focus has been given to these areas.

Mr Agyeman Manu called for the support of the media in educating the public on patient safety and advocating for high standards of care within the country’s health care delivery system, especially for vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children.

Dr Patrick Kuma-Aboagye, the Director-General of the Ghana Health Service (GHS), iterated that the safety of patients, including maternal and newborns, were of great concern to the GHS for which reason it had made effort to develop the implementation

Guidelines for the National Healthcare Quality Strategy. He further explained Ghana’s concept of Network of Practice as a strategy to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

Nana Ama Serwaa Bonsu, the Queen mother of Bekwai, and President of the Queen mothers’ Foundation, also highlighted the need for compassionate, professional and respectful care by health staff. She said that a common cause of the medical error was poor communication and that the need to improve it. She urged healthcare professionals not to condemn, and also acknowledge the confidentiality and privacy of patients.

The World Health Organization used the occasion to announce plans to support



the review of the National Healthcare Quality Strategy, and an assessment of patient safety implementation activities that will inform the finalization of the National Patient Safety Policy.

GHANA LAYS GROUND TO TRANSFORM HEALTH SECTOR LEADERSHIP



Participants pose for a group photo after the workshop

"I realized through this training that team support and psychological safety within the work environment is paramount for team members to give off their best."

Dr Marion Okoh-Owusu
Regional Director of Health Services
Western North Region

"The training has helped us to research about the things we need to do, taking cognisance of the challenges we've had in the past and see how we can bring these green skills and attitudes to bear on our jobs as we work towards achieving Universal Health Coverage".

Dr Patrick Kumah-Aboagye
Director General, Ghana Health Service

Ghana's efforts to transform its health sector leadership has received a significant boost, following a capacity building initiative supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa aimed at forming a cadre of leaders to meet the current and future public health and health care delivery needs of the country.

Thirty participants, from the health sector took part in a four-day workshop - the Pathways to Leadership for Health Transformation (PLHT) programme from 22 – 25 September 2021 in Accra organized by WHO. The Organization worked with Health Ministers to design a programme that will contribute to leaders being more results-oriented, transparent, accountable and equipped to deliver on their mandate of improving people's health.

"This transformative programme is to give you an opportunity to deepen your management and leadership skills to share strategies, challenges and resources with each other and partners," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

As the government of Ghana embarks

on health sector reforms to ensure that everyone has access to affordable and good quality health, attention to governance and leadership across the different



components of Ghana's health system, including infrastructure, medicines and medical products, health workers, health information and health systems financing is key.

"The issues of health have become multifaceted and dynamic so a training programme like the one being organized by the WHO will help sharpen the leadership skills of the participants so that we can execute the proper instructions for the overall wellbeing of Ghanaians," said Alhaji Mahama Asei Seini, Deputy Minister of Health who took part in the workshop.

Building effective teams that can support the existing health systems was one key element of the training. The participants were also taken through the processes of teambuilding, using peer coaching to resolve internal problems. Key tools of appreciative leadership, where leaders learn how to manage their emotions and that of others was brought into sharp focus.

This holistic approach to leadership development was first developed for WHO AFRO staff and delivered as the AFRO Pathways to Leadership Program. Following the programme's success in 2019, African health Ministers recommended that it be extended to Member States. Presently over 30 sub-national health officials in the Republic of Congo have participated in the pilot phase and plans are underway to launch the program across the region.

Ghana Infectious Disease Center installs first Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) Analyzer



Ghana like many other countries across the globe, is grappling with a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic driven by the delta variant. Since July 2021, the number of new COVID-19 cases recorded have increased significantly by 6.5 times compared to the month of June 2021 with 5-fold increase in deaths. All efforts are being made to provide the best of care to COVID patients but with only 2.7% of the population fully vaccinated and the delta variant in circulation, the country still stands a high risk of COVID-19 infections with increased hospitalizations.

The Ghana Infectious Disease Center (GIDC), a 100-bed capacity facility, is the country’s first infectious disease center built with the support of the Ghana COVID-19 Private Sector Fund in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The facility is Ghana’s major referral point for COVID-19 patients in need of intensive critical care. GIDC receives support from a number of benevolent individuals and organizations to augment Government’s efforts.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners continuously provide technical and logistical support to the center to facilitate effective case management. The WHO with the support of the World Bank’s Pandemic Emergency Facility Fund, donated and installed the center’s very first Arterial Blood Gas Analyzer since its inception. About twenty health staff including doctors and nurses have been trained on the use of the equipment.

Dr Christian Owoo, Coordinator for Severe and Critical Covid-19 cases says “the equipment will

serve as a holistic point of care which will provide a shorter processing time with results in less than 5 minutes instead of the sometimes long waiting time at the laboratory”. The ABG Analyzer will be used to measure combinations of pH, blood gas (i.e. carbon dioxide and oxygen levels), electrolytes, and metabolites parameters from whole blood samples. The critical care equipment will in addition, “promote efficiency and guide critical case management. For example, the impact of any change made in a ventilator can be monitored by taking a sample and analyzing within minutes.” Dr Owoo explained. With the availability of an Arterial Blood Gas Analyzer, Dr Owoo and his team are another step ahead in providing optimum intensive care to critically ill COVID-19 patients in the country.

More vaccines arrive in Ghana



Ghana’s robust COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues to receive a boost with donations pouring in from the Western Governments through the COVAX Facility.

The Ministry of Health has in the past few weeks, taken delivery of more than 2 million doses of AstraZeneca’s Covishield vaccines from the Governments of Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Norway the Governments of Germany, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, with Germany contributing the largest single consignment of over 1.5 million doses to

Ghana.

The donations are in fulfillment of pledges made by the governments to contribute to COVAX.

The successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent vaccine rollout in Ghana, as believed by many, could partly be attributed to such strong support from partners.

“We are aware of the difference your logistic, technical and financial support has made in the management of the COVID-19 in Ghana”, Deputy Minister for Health Alhaji Mahama Asei Seini said when he received the 1.5 million doses from Germany.

In a brief statement to hand over the vaccines, German Ambassador to Ghana, Daniel Krull, acknowledged the contribution his Government had made to Ghana’s fight against the pandemic. Mr. Krull revealed that Germany’s bilateral support to Ghana stood at more than 25 million Euros.

Ghana is expected to receive additional 1.3 million

doses of Pfizer vaccines from the US Government in October. It is anticipated that the latest ship-



ments would further push the country closer to reaching the global goal of fully vaccinating 10% of every country’s population by 30 September, set in May by the World Health Assembly, which Ghana missed.

Ghana poised to achieve 95 95 95 target with Differentiated Service Delivery Strategic Initiative



Participants contributing to discussions at the launch

“I would like to reiterate WHO’s commitment to fully supports Ghana’s HIV response and encourage everyone to join hands to achieve the objectives of the DSD strategic initiative.”

*Dr Francis Kasolo ,
WHO Representative, Ghana*

In 2016, the NACP adopted WHO recommendations to treat all people living with HIV (PLHIV) with ART, regardless of immune status or clinical stage. Among the recommendations adopted was Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) to improve HIV service delivery and fast-tracking of the HIV response. Subsequently, a comprehensive DSD operational manual was developed in 2017 and has since guided a phased scale-up of DSD in Ghana. The implementation of the DSD-based acceleration plan led to major gains and progress in the HIV programme for Ghana, however the country fell short of achieving the 90-90-90 target, with 63% knowing their HIV status, 95% on ART and 73% virally suppressed at the end of 2020.

Based on WHO recommendations, the Global Fund approved the Differentiated Service Delivery Strategic Initiative for HIV (DSD SI) for 10 selected countries including Ghana. The initiative, which is anticipated to be a game-changer in Ghana’s HIV response, makes available essential technical assistance for the scale-up of differentiated HIV Testing Services (dHTS), differentiated treatment (dART), and advanced HIV disease

(AHD) care. The technical assistance will be provided by JHPIEGO, SH:24 and EQUIP HEALTH Ghana under the technical coordination of WHO. Some of the activities to be implemented include the introduction of a virtual platform for HIV Self Testing (HIVST), Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), and community DSD approaches including community ARV refill. “Overall, what we are trying to do is to help position Ghana on the trajectory to maximize its outreach. What we need to do is to differentiate the service delivery in order to find those that are harder to reach and make sure we’re going the final mile and including all in accessing services”, Nicole Delaney, Global Fund Portfolio Manager for Ghana explained.

At a ceremony to launch the Differentiated Service Delivery Strategic Initiative for HIV (DSD SI), stakeholders expressed excitement about the initiative and affirmed the need for continuous collaboration and alignment of efforts to ensure Ghana achieves the 95-95-95 targets.

The Country Director for UNAIDS, Angela Trenton-Mbonde, said “a strong partnership which brings everyone coming together in a coordinated manner,

could address the challenges, bring real solution to the people and have the expected results through the DSD SI”. She added that the voices of key beneficiaries need to be heard to enable implementers address their challenges.

The DSD SI aims to catalyze more effective use of the country’s grant allocations for HIV programme implementation and ensure that national targets are achieved. “In our efforts, we need to mobilize additional resources to make sure every gap is filled and to be able to, in line with the principles of focusing on specific populations, ensure that no one is left behind”, says Dr Stephen Ayisi-Addo, Programme Manager of the NACP.

The successful launch of the DSD SI in Ghana is a demonstration of the collaborative work among the three levels of WHO and the Global Fund.

As stated the remarks by Dr Francis Kasolo, WHO country representative for Ghana, the strategic initiative will enable all key stakeholders involved in HIV in Ghana to align their differentiated HIV efforts in order to enable the country to achieve the 95-95-95 targets by 2025.

Sustaining the fight against COVID-19 in the Ashanti Region through Risk Communication and Community Engagement



Mrs Kobi interacting with Community Health Committee Members in Oforikrom Municipal Area

The Ashanti region is the most populous in the country and the centre of commercial activities due to its geographical location. Indigenes of the area are deeply rooted in culture and tradition. “These factors make social interaction high, causing any outbreak to be more impactful on the people and the response, more challenging”, this is according to the Ashanti Regional Director of Health Services, Dr Emmanuel Tinkorang. The region has cumulatively recorded about COVID-19 20,526 infections and 374 deaths. Poor adherence to public health measures and misinformation about the COVID-19 disease have been cited as the major causes of fuelling transmission.

Throughout the pandemic, the Regional Health Directorate has intensified Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) activities to help keep the deadly disease at bay.

The role of Community Health Committee members has been very significant in ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols.

They are made up of dedicated residents with diverse backgrounds, volunteer their time, resources, and expertise to support district health officers in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 disease in their communities. They do this by

providing timely and accurate information on the causes, transmission, common signs/symptoms, and prevention of the disease.

Community radio stations also play a significant role in disseminating COVID-19 information to the public, and health officials say they have made a lot of strides in curbing misinformation through the media.

Since the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, uptake has been high in the Ashanti region. However, a lot remains to be done as after the launch of the vaccination campaign in March 2021, many residents still have doubts about the existence of the disease and the efficacy of the vaccine due to “In a discussion with the Country Representative for WHO, we thought that we needed support from someone with rich experience in risk communication to help with capacity building at the lower level to help us with strategies to overcome the challenges”, Dr Emmanuel Tinkorang, Ashanti Regional Director of Health Services explained.

The World Health Organization, in response to the request, deployed a Health Promotion Specialist from its Africa Regional Office to support Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCCE) activities in the region.

In an interview with the media when she arrived at her duty station, Mrs. Aminata Kobi said the WHO was targeting the Ashanti Region because it had been identified as one of the hotspots in Ghana. She added that coupled with its population size, the successful implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures would have significant effects on the other regions.

The WHO technical support is expected to boost the capacity of health promotion officers to scale up public education and increase vaccine uptake in a region where the Delta variant is driving transmission at the community level.

As the pandemic fatigue sets in, there is an urgent need to intensify community engagement and the use of other proven approaches to promote continuous adherence to public health measures in Ghana’s second-largest city and beyond.

WHO GHANA SUPPORTS ONGOING COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT WITH DIGITAL TABLETS



The World Health Organization has reiterated its commitment to helping the Government of Ghana achieve its set target for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout by presenting 1 000 pieces of digital tablets to support the ongoing vaccination campaign.

Presenting the items to the Ghana Health Service, Dr Sally-Ann Ohene, Disease

Prevention and Control Officer at the World Health Organization Ghana Country Office said the tablets were to be used to scale up e-registration at the various vaccination centres and help reduce delays in data entry.

“With funding support from the Government of Canada, WHO Ghana plans to present additional 500 digital tablets to the Ghana Health Service”, Dr Ohene hinted.

The Programme Manager for the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) at the Ghana Health Service, Dr Kwame Amponsa-Achiano, who received the items on behalf of the Ghana Health Service, expressed appreciation to the kind gesture.

Dr Amponsa-Achiano stated that the donation of the tablets was very timely and

would be deployed immediately to the field for use in the ongoing vaccination campaign.

The digital tablets are anticipated to be useful for data capturing in other health interventions beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.



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