

#### **REPORT ON**

# PROVISION OF HIV, COVID 19 AND OTHER ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICES TO FEMALE HEAD PORTERS – (KAYAYEI)

**AND** 

**OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS** 

IN

ACCRA METROPOLITAN AND GA CENTRAL IN GREATER ACCRA
REGION

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#### **Abbreviations**

BCC Behavior Change Communication

GAC Ghana AIDS Commission

GAR Greater Accra Region

GHS Ghana Health Service

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

TB Tuberculosis

HTS HIV Testing Services

IEC Information Education Communication

SGBV Sexual Gender Based Violence

STIs Sexually Transmitted Infections

TSU Technical Support Unit

#### 1.0 Introduction

HIV continues to have unfavorable effects on people's health, socialization and the economy despite progress made in its management globally. The 2019 National and Sub-national Estimates Report of the GAC shows that there were 5,613 new infections among young people; about a quarter of all new HIV infections in the country. The national HIV prevalence for young people (15-24) is 0.66% with an HIV population of 38,090. The number of young people on ART stands at 8,049 representing 21% of national ART coverage.

Young people (15-24 years) are considered a vulnerable group for HIV infection as they are sexually active and often engage in unprotected sexual intercourse. Comprehensive knowledge of HIV among young persons is declining as well as condom use among young persons with two or more partners. The health of young people is a priority, as reflected in the 2021-2025 National Strategic Plan. Increasing uptake of HIV Services and the demand for Adolescents and young persons to know their HIV sero-status is a critical component in reducing the risk of HIV transmission and acts as the entry point of care for this target group.

To reduce new infections among Adolescents and young persons out of school in Accra Metropolitan and GA Central constituencies, the Ghana AIDS Commission in collaboration with the UNDP and stakeholders spearheaded an integrated BCC, health screening outreach and sensitization on implications of COVID-19 to augment efforts toward reduction of new HIV and COVID-19 infections. The comprehensive planned Activities of the UNDP project in Ghana was under the theme aimed at strengthening Community Health Systems to support the Continuity of Essential Services for the Vulnerable during and Post Pandemic of CoVID-19. The project aimed at reaching 2000 clients with HIV Testing Services and other essential health services.

Additionally, the integrated outreach promoted service uptake towards the attainment of the global 95-95-95 targets which require that 95% of all persons who are infected with HIV will get to know their HIV status; 95% of those who test HIV positive will be put on sustained anti-retroviral treatment; 95% of all persons who are on treatment will have suppressed viral load.

#### 2.0 Description of Target Group

Kayayei are predominantly female migrants from northern Ghana or other places who work as head porters in the capital markets in Ghana such as Accra, Tema, Kumasi, Techiman and Takoradi. They are primarily young, low-income, poorly educated and are vulnerable to several forms of risk such as theft, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), substance abuse, rape, unprotected sex and contracting STI's, as well as HIV.

There has been an unprecedented migration of these young girls and women from less endowed areas, particularly the three regions of the north to urban areas in southern Ghana. Many of these girls and women have migrated in search of greener pastures or better livelihood opportunities. Others also escaped with friends from ethnic conflicts and forced marriages to elderly men. It is estimated that more than 7,787 kayayei live in the business Centre of Accra, and elsewhere, and are between the ages of 10 and 35. Most have migrated to southern metropolises from Ghana's northern regions (UNFPA, 2011).

These girls live in the big markets, work as head porters (Kayayei) and are exposed to all sorts of threats; physical and emotional. In order to offset these risks they reportedly develop relationships with acquaintances that, supposedly, know the nuances of the environment and could offer them some protection. These relationships however, instead of being a safety net, reportedly have rather become snares to the Kayayei. These girls are thus vulnerable to gender based violence and its consequences such as rape, sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. While some of

these pregnant girls are denied by their partners, others face the risk of cohabiting with their partners against their will. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought a toll to the economy of nations and individuals globally, not sparing these kayeyei. Though the virus mostly affect and is fatal among older adults, It has been known that Adolescent and young people are also susceptible to infection, and some develop severe symptoms, particularly if they are living with HIV, obesity, diabetes high blood pressure and other chronic conditions

#### 3.0 Target Group

The campaign was organized by the Ghana AIDS Commission with sponsorship from UNDP. The campaign offered services to the following:

- Female Head Porters –(Kayayei) and their high risk Partners
- Market Women
- Fish Mongers and Sea Fishermen
- Truck Drivers and their Mates
- Community members

#### 4.0 Overall Objective of the Campaign

The goal of the campaign was to increase access to and use of integrated sexual and reproductive health services (especially HIV and STI prevention) that are gender-responsive among 2,000 Female Head Porters (Kayayei) and other vulnerable groups, through education and service provision.

The specific objectives of the campaign were:

- To galvanize community support and mobilize target populations for HIV Testing Services, sexual and reproductive health services
- To increase awareness and knowledge to prevent HIV, COVID-19 and other co-morbidities among vulnerable youth

- A To educate and sensitize the male partners of kayayei to support their partners to access HIV testing, treatment and other health services
- X To educate and sensitize hawkers, drivers and their mates to access HIV testing, treatment and other health services
- 1 To increase their knowledge and establish linkages to essential health services
- A To demonstrate the proper use of condoms to 80% of the community members.

#### 5.0 Outreach Team

Staff from the Ghana AIDS Commission including the Heart to Health Ambassadors, Nutritionists, Peer Educators and Health Care Providers supported the integrated health screening. Activities were undertaken in collaboration with selected health facilities in AMA and Ga Central of the Ghana Health Service, Stop TB Ghana, the Heart-to-Heart Ambassadors of GAC, Mentor Mothers and other Civil Society Organizations implementing HIV and TB activities.

## 6.0 Provision of Essential Services (HIV, COVID and other Essential Health Services)

Nine outreach services were delivered at selected venues within Accra Metropolitan and Ga Central Municipality. The target population benefited from the following services:

- Free HIV Testing Services
- Free malaria screening
- Free COVID-19 Vaccination
- Blood Sugar Testing
- A Blood Pressure Screening
- Body Mass Index measurement
- Free Male condom distribution
- X Talk on HIV, COVID-19, Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and Substance Abuse

- Nutrition Counselling
- Stigma reduction and assertiveness education

#### 7.0 Activities Undertaken

The following activities were undertaken:

7.1 The Heart to Heart Ambassadors made up of Mr. John Azumah, Ms. Gifty Torkornu, and Mrs. Charity Owusu Balou and Mentor Mothers provided health education especially on stigma and assertiveness to participants during the health screening exercise. The Team also assured participants that there is hope for persons living with HIV (PLHIV) due to available treatment services. They also counseled newly identified persons who were reactive and encouraged them to seek confirmation and treatment immediately, linking them to their preferred treatment sites.

Two nutritionists from the Ghana Health Service provided health education on wellbeing of clients and COVID-19. They touched on the precautionary measures that need to be adhered to, to avoid being infected with and spread of COVID-19 such as keeping distance in public, constant wearing of nose masks, regular hand washing with soap under running water. They added that the devastating effect of the disease is vast and the need to keep oneself safe is paramount by boosting the immune system through eating balanced diet, taking more water and also involving in physical exercises. Participant were educated on malaria, where they were advised to sleep under treated mosquito nets, avoid self-medications, to test at the hospital, clinics or renowned pharmacy for the presence of the malaria parasite before taking any medication.

As part of HIV Testing Services, clients benefitted from pre-test and post-test counseling. Education was given on Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) like Syphilis, Gonorrhea and HIV where participants were entreated to take

advantage on the ongoing exercise in other to know their status. She uttered that STI can be contracted through unprotected sex. Participants were also educated on the need to become advocates for HIV testing and to encourage pregnant women to go for testing in other to prevent mother to child transmission. Participants were encouraged to partake in the ongoing activity to know their status by taking up the free HTS and the other services.

A representative from SWAA Ghana gave a talk on gender-based violence and substance abuse at various sites of program implementation. She spoke about the various, act of violence that result in physical, sexual, emotional or psychological harm or suffering to girls, boys, women and men, including threats of such acts, on the basis of specific gender whether occurring or private life. She highlighted on gender equality issues, in which she indicated that both sexes should be given equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

Stop TB Ghana team also educated the mases who were present for the screening and took sputum samples of individuals for further diagnosis.

Some of the participants benefitted from COVID-19 vaccination with the support of the Health Directorate of Accra Metro.

Information, Communication and Educational Posters on HIV Testing and Counselling, Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission, Be Bold and Know your HIV Status provided by the Ghana AIDS Commission were distributed as part of the sensitization to all participants and visitors and also some placed visibly at the event ground.

Participants were given both male condoms to encourage safe-sex practices as well as demonstration on how to use the condoms.

#### **Strategies Adopted**

- The team adopted event location testing and door to door testing at the various sites.
- A peer education strategy provided a learning opportunity during the health screening exercise
- Through small group and large group discussion, participants benefitted from the messages disseminated

#### 8.0 Result

#### 8.1 HIV Testing Services (HTS)

A total of three thousand, five hundred and eighty (3,580) participants voluntarily tested for HIV and knew their status. These comprised of two thousand three hundred and eighty (2,380) females and one thousand two hundred (1,200) males. The team recorded eighty (80) reactive cases, made up of fifty-eight (58) females and twenty-two (22) males. This represents 2.2% yield. Reactive clients were counselled by the nurses and referred to the Heart to Heart Ambassadors and Mentor Mothers for further counseling. Clients were also advised to report to any nearby facility for further confirmatory test and early treatment services.

Gender	HIV Screening	Percentage of Male &	HIV Reactive
	Number Tested	Females Tested	Cases
Male	1,200	34%	22
Female	2,380	66%	58
Total	3,580	100	80

#### 8.2 Random Blood Sugar

There were 1,172 persons screened for diabetes through checking of their random blood sugar. This consist of four hundred and thirteen males and

seven hundred and fifty-nine females. Each client was further counselled on the importance of regulating their blood sugar levels.

Total number of cases	Number of females	Number of males
1,172	759	413

#### 8.3 Malaria Testing

A total number of six hundred and thirty-four (634) persons benefitted from the Malaria screening. Four hundred and twenty-two (422) females and two hundred and twelve (212) males were tested out of which sixty-nine (69) tested positive and were referred to a physician on site for further counselling.

Gender	Screened	Percentage of Male And	Positive
	Number Tested	Female Tested	Cases
Males 212		33%	25
Females 422		67%	44

#### 8.4 Hepatitis B

Thirty-six participants were screened for Hepatitis B. Out of the number, thirty-five were negative. One person was diagnosed and referred to Physician on site during the programme for further examination and counselling.

Gender	Screened	Screened Percentage of Male And	
	Number Tested	Female Tested	Cases

Males	11	31%	0
Females	25	69%	1

#### 8.5 COVID-19 Vaccination

Vaccine		
Pfizer	New (1st dose)	43 people
	Old (2nd dose)	17 people
Moderna	New (1st dose)	36 people
	Old (2nd dose)	8 people

#### 8.6 Blood Pressure (BP) checked

One Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty (1,680) persons BP were checked which comprised of five hundred and forty-nine males and one thousand one hundred and seventy-four females. Each participant was counselled and educated on the need to maintain normal blood pressure.

#### 8.7 Tuberculosis Screening

Fifty-One (51) sputum samples were collected by Stop TB Ghana team to the laboratory for tuberculosis screening during the outreach held on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2021. The results of these tests are yet to be shared with the persons who received the service.

#### 8.8 Summary IEC/BCC and Condoms Distributed

Location	Condoms	Leaflet/ Posters
	Distributed	Distributed

Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	118	678
Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	0	678
Anyaa Market Day 1	0	1,040
Agbogbloshie Police Station 3	0	220
Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	0	435
Usher Fort Day 1	229	330
Usher Fort Day 2	210	420
Anyaa Market Day 3	0	210
Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	250	428
HChorkor Chemunaa Day 2	230	431
Total	1,037	4,870

At the end of the nine-day health screening outreach, the following results were achieved:

- Approximately 3,580 people were tested for HIV and received their results
- All the people who were HIV reactive were linked to the nearest facility and subsequently, positive cases would be enrolled into care
- 1,680 women, youth, and other vulnerable groups were screened for Blood Pressure and Body Mass Index Screening
- 1,172 women, youth, and other vulnerable group's blood Sugar were checked.
- Participants' knowledge on HIV and AIDS, COVID-19, Sexual, Gender based Violence and Substance Abuse were enhanced
- IE/BCC materials were made available and distributed to approximately 4,000 people
- 1,037 male condoms were distributed at the events
- A,870 leaflets and posters were distributed
- 2.000 nose masks were distributed

#### 9.0 Linkage to Care

HIV education has the potential for increasing HIV testing and access to health information and services. Knowing one's status is an important element in the global quest to end the HIV epidemic as a public health threat as well as achieve the 95-95-95 fast track treatment targets.

#### 10.0 Findings/Observation

The following findings/observations were made;

- The door to door outreach increased demand for uptake of HIV testing especially among community members
- Clients benefitted from education on HIV, COVID-19, nutrition counselling,
   substance abuse, Gender and Sexual Based Violence
- The health outreach was successful due to the collaboration between the key actors in the community who provided guidance and advice on how to reach some of the vulnerable populations to participate in the event
- The multilingual nature of the outreach team increased the number of uptake of the various services
- It was observed that two (2) persons HIV results were known cases and they were already on medication.
- The adoption of an integrated health screening approach helped in reducing stigma
- The team observed that, the community members hardly access health services and therefore, such interventions should be frequently designed for these target group.

#### 11.0 Challenges

- Insufficient Malaria Test Kit for the screening exercise
- Unwillingness of some community members, fishermen, fishmongers and the elderly to visit the testing location and patronize HIV Testing Services due to stigma

- Inability to distribute condoms due to religious beliefs on sex in some communities
- Some clients had no phones making it difficult to get their contact numbers to follow up on reactive cases
- Inadequate male condoms and nose masks
- Two of the glucometer Blood Sugar monitor was stolen at Usher Fort and Chorkor screening sites
- Faulty scale for checking Body Max Index in the course of the outreach

#### 12.0 Conclusion

Integrated health intervention is very desirable in limited resource setting like Ghana and this gives value for money. The Ghana AIDS Commission and UNDP integrated outreach and other essential health services, provided the platform for people to test and know their HIV status, screened for hepatitis, malaria, checked their weight and blood pressure, COVID-19 vaccination and advised accordingly. Community members and vulnerable groups within Accra Metropolitan and GA Central Municipal environs in the Greater Accra Region benefited from education on HIV, Stigma Reduction, nutritional counselling, Tuberculosis, COVID-19, SGBV, and Substance Abuse.

Though the duration of the project was not that lengthy (9days), based on the interactions and observation, the awareness created within this vulnerable community of young people of divergent origin on the need to live healthily, adopt preventive life-styles from transmissible diseases was massive and recommendation.

## Data on various Screening Conducted

### **Summary on HIV Testing Services**

			Number Tested		Tested Reactive		
Date	Activity	Total	M	F	M	F	Total
1/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	156	54	102	2	2	4
2/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	249	93	156	0	2	2
3/12/2021	HTS at Anyaa market Day 1	177	84	93	0	0	0
4/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	683	110	573	2	15	17
7/12/2021	HTS at Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	322	89	233	1	8	9
8/12/2021	HTS at Usher Fort Day 1	528	180	348	14	18	32
9/12/2021	HTS at Usher Fort Day 2	421	182	239	1	4	5
14/12/2021	HTS at Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	586	226	360	2	5	7
15/12/2021	HTS at Chorkor Chemunaa Day 2	458	182	276	2	4	6
Total		3,580	1,200	2,380	22	58	80

## Summary for Malaria

			Number Tested		Tested Positive		
Date	Activity	Total	M	F	M	F	Total
1/12/2021	Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	111	35	76	2	8	10
2/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	167	50	117	3	3	6
3/12/2021	Anyaa market Day 1	151	75	76	6	7	13
4/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	126	23	103	4	13	17
7/12/2021	Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	79	29	50	10	13	23
8/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
9/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
14/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
15/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		634	212	422	25	44	69

## Summary for Random Blood Sugar

			Number Tested		Tested		
Date	Activity	Total	M	F	M	F	Total
1/12/2021	Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	8	6	2	0	0	0
3/12/2021	Anyaa market Day 1	83	48	35	0	0	0
4/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	231	37	194	0	0	0
7/12/2021	Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	149	59	90	0	0	0
8/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 1	184	70	114	0	0	0
9/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 2	192	87	105	0	0	0
14/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	191	52	139	0	0	0
15/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Day 2	134	54	80	0	0	0
Total		1,172	413	759	0	0	0

## Summary for Blood Pressure

			Number Tested		Tested Positive			
Date	Activity	Total	M	F	M	F	Total	
1/12/2021	Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	62	12	50	0	0	0	
2/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	130	51	79	0	0	0	
3/12/2021	Anyaa market Day 1	78	43	35	0	0	0	
4/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	328	54	274	0	0	0	
7/12/2021	Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	166	59	107	0	0	0	
8/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 1	286	70	199	0	0	0	
9/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 2	185	81	104	0	0	0	
14/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	309	98	211	0	0	0	
15/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Day 2	196	81	115	0	0	0	
Total		1,680	549	1,174	0	0	0	

## **Summary for Weight**

			Number Tested		Tested		
Date	Activity	Total	M	F	M	F	Total
1/12/2021	Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	59	43	16	0	0	0
3/12/2021	Anyaa market Day 1	56	29	27	0	0	0
4/12/2021	Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	0	0	0	0	0	0
7/12/2021	Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	22	8	12	0	0	0
8/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
9/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
14/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
15/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		137	80	55	0	0	0

## **Summary for Hepatitis**

Date	Activity		Number Tested		Tested Positive			
		Total	M	F	M	F	Total	
1/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie G1 Pub Area Day 1	8	0	8	0	1	1	
2/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie Railway Day 2	6	5	1	0	0	0	
3/12/2021	HTS at Anyaa market Day 1	22	6	16	0	0	0	
4/12/2021	HTS at Agbogbloshie Police Station Day 3	0	0	0	0	0	0	
7/12/2021	Anyaa Polyclinic Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
8/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
9/12/2021	Usher Fort Day 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
14/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
15/12/2021	Chorkor Chemunaa Last Stop Day 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total		36	11	25	0	1	1	

#### Summary of Usher Fort data for COVID-19 Vaccine

#### Pfizer -19 Vaccine

New (1st dose) = 43 people

Old (2nd dose) = 17 people

#### Moderna - 19 Vaccine

New (1st dose) = 36 people

Old (2nd dose) = 8 people

## 13.0 Picture Gallery



Nurses from GHS offering HTS at GA Central outreach





A health Nutritionist offering a talk







Participants waiting patiently to get screened





A trader getting tested during the outreach































A participant receiving his results after testing





