



GHANA HIV & AIDS NETWORK (GHANET)

WORLD AIDS DAY 2024

THEME TAKE THE RIGHTS PATH
#EndAIDSNow



MONDAY
DECEMBER 2, 2024



EXHIBITION PARK NEAR THE
SPANNER BUS STOP IN FRONT OF
THE ACCRA MALL



6AM TO 10AM



INTRODUCTION

The Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) and its partners commemorated the 2024 World AIDS Day on Monday, December 2, 2024, under the theme “TAKE THE RIGHTS PATH”. The event took place at the Exhibition Park near the Spanner Bus Stop in front of the Accra Mall. The day was dedicated to reflecting on the impact each of us has had on the lives of millions of people worldwide and assess the progress made in managing and controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The event also gave participants the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to ending AIDS by 2030.

Dignitaries at the event include Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene, Director-General, Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC), Dr. Stephen Ayisi Addo, Programme Manager, National AIDS/STI Control Programme (NACP), Mr. Héctor Sucilla Pérez (Country Director, UNAIDS), Mr. Rolf Olson, U.S. Deputy Ambassador to Ghana, Dr. Amb. Mokowa Blay Adu-Gyamfi, Presidential Advisor on HIV and AIDS, Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Hon. Bernard Okoe-Boye,

Minister of Health, Dr. Frank Lule, WHO Representative, Mr. Joshua Ansah, Secretary-General, Trades Union Congress, Mr. Ernest Amoabeng Ortsin, President, Ghana HIV and AIDS Network, Mr. Samuel Hackman, Executive Secretary of the Country Coordinating Mechanism and Mrs. Elsie Ayeh, President of Network of Person Living with HIV (NAP+).





KEY MESSAGES

Dr. Amb. Mokowa Blay Adu-Gyamfi took the chair and welcomed all participants with warmth and appreciation. She acknowledged the critical role of the government and its partners in the ongoing fight against HIV and AIDS in Ghana.

In her address, Dr. Amb. Adu-Gyamfi highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving the national goal of eliminating HIV as a public health threat. She emphasized the need for continued investment in prevention, care, and support services, as well as ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or gender, have access to the healthcare they need. She also underlined the need for strong leadership in tackling stigma and discrimination, which remains a major barrier to HIV prevention and treatment. She emphasized that the fight against HIV is not only a health issue but also a human rights issue, where every person deserves dignity, respect, and access to necessary services.

In her closing remarks, Dr. Amb. Adu-Gyamfi called on all stakeholders especially government, civil society organizations, and development partners to renew their commitment and work together towards achieving a future where HIV is no longer a threat to public health. She assured the audience that with sustained collaboration and dedication, Ghana can reach its goal of ending AIDS by 2030.

Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene welcomed participants to the commemoration of 2024 World AIDS Day. In his address, he acknowledged the significant progress Ghana has made in its response to HIV and AIDS. He highlighted that the country's HIV prevalence remains low at 1.5%, and there has been increased access to life-saving prevention, treatment, and care services. However, Dr. Atuahene also pointed out the ongoing challenges, such as the slow decline in new infections and AIDS-related deaths.

He outlined several key challenges, including the low uptake of HIV testing services, with an estimated 5% of people living with HIV unaware of their status, and the significant proportion of people living with HIV who are not on antiretroviral



Dr. Amb. Mokowa Blay Adu-Gyamfi
(Presidential Advisor on HIV and AIDS)

treatment, which increases the risk of new infections and deaths. He also emphasized the economic implications of the epidemic, noting that HIV-related illnesses result in substantial productivity loss for Ghana, with individuals losing an average of five productive days per month.



Dr. Kyeremeh Atuahene
(Director-General, Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC))

Looking forward, he called for a shift in perspective, urging the nation to treat HIV prevention, care, and support as critical investments in national development. He also emphasized that access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right.



Dr. Atuahene expressed his gratitude to the Global Fund, PEPFAR, UN agencies, and other development partners for their continued support. He concluded his speech with a powerful African proverb: "When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion," urging unity in the fight to end AIDS.

Dr. Stephen Ayisi Addo addressed participants on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service and National AIDS/STI Control Programme. He acknowledged the progress made in the fight against HIV and AIDS, including the reduction of AIDS-related deaths and increased access to antiretroviral therapy. However, he noted that between January and September, about 500 people died from AIDS-related illnesses, and 35,000 new HIV cases were reported. He also highlighted the importance of behavioral change communication, as many people still do not fully understand the reality of HIV.

Dr. Ayisi Addo outlined several key actions including the scaling up of pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis, promoting condom use, citing recent studies showing a decline in utilization, and ensuring the continuous availability of HIV



Dr. Stephen Ayisi Addo
Programme Manager, National AIDS/STI Control Programme (NACP)

commodities. He also reported that, through collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and development partners, challenges related to clearing HIV commodities at the ports has been addressed, assuring the audience that there would be no shortages moving forward. He called for collective efforts to achieve zero new infections, zero AIDS-related deaths, and zero stigma and discrimination, urging all to work together in this crucial mission.

SOLIDARITY STATEMENTS

Mr. Héctor Sucilla Pérez expressed the strong support of UNAIDS for Ghana in its fight against HIV. He acknowledged the progress made but emphasized that the challenges remain significant. He pointed out that gender disparities continue to be a major issue, with women accounting for 60% of new infections in Ghana. Stigma and discrimination, he noted, continue to hinder access to HIV services, and barriers to care for adolescents, which include parental consent requirements must be addressed.

Mr. Sucilla Pérez outlined key priorities moving forward, including addressing gender-based violence and ensuring equal access to education for women and girls. He also stressed the importance of increasing access to HIV testing and treatment for children, as their coverage remains significantly lower than that of adults.



Mr. Héctor Sucilla Pérez
(Country Director, UNAIDS)

In his concluding remarks, he emphasized the importance of protecting everyone's rights and ensuring that no one is left behind in the fight to end AIDS. He called for bold action to achieve a future free of AIDS by 2030, urging continued commitment and collective efforts.



Mr. Rolf Olson acknowledged the significance of the day as both a solemn remembrance of those lost to HIV and a celebration of the progress made in combating the epidemic. He highlighted that over the years, PEPFAR has invested over \$120 billion globally, providing life-saving treatment to millions in 55 countries, including Ghana. He further noted that in Ghana, PEPFAR, in collaboration with the Global Fund and government resources, supports treatment for over 150,000 individuals living with HIV. Key strategies include preventing mother-to-child transmission and engaging adolescents and key populations. He reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to continue supporting Ghana in its efforts to combat HIV and AIDS.



Mr. Rolf Olson
(U.S. Deputy Ambassador to Ghana)

Mr. Olson concluded by stressing the need for continued focus on accelerating HIV treatment and prevention efforts, ensuring equitable access to care, and combating stigma and discrimination. He emphasized that through collective action and Ghana's strong partnerships, the goal of eliminating HIV as a public health threat by 2030 can be achieved.

The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, delivered a spoke on behalf of the government of Ghana. He spoke about the need for continued legislative support to drive the national response to HIV and AIDS. Hon. Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of the epidemic, including poverty, gender inequality, and lack of access to education, while emphasizing the

government's commitment to ensuring that HIV prevention, treatment, and care are accessible to all Ghanaians.



Hon. Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu
(Minister for Parliamentary Affairs)

Hon. Bernard Okoe Boye expressed his strong support for Ghana's continued efforts to combat HIV and AIDS. He emphasized the government's commitment to improving the healthcare system and making HIV-related services more accessible to all citizens. He acknowledged the progress made so far but noted that there is still work to be done, particularly in reducing new infections and addressing the stigma that surrounds HIV. He reaffirmed the Ministry of Health's dedication to ensuring that no one is excluded from accessing treatment and care, with a focus on vulnerable groups.



Hon. Bernard Okoe Boye
(Minister of Health)



Dr. Frank Lule spoke in solidarity with Ghana's efforts to fight HIV and AIDS. He noted that the country serves as a model for other nations in the region. Dr. Lule emphasized the importance of global cooperation, with organizations like the WHO supporting countries in their pursuit of universal health coverage. He reiterated the WHO's commitment to working with Ghana to overcome challenges such as stigma, inadequate healthcare access, and rising infection rates, ensuring that HIV care is available for everyone.



Dr. Lule highlighted that HIV is a complex challenge intertwined with social determinants such as poverty, gender inequality, and violence, which are exacerbated by stigma and discrimination. He stressed that protecting human rights is essential for achieving universal HIV care and breaking barriers to treatment and prevention.

While significant progress has been made over the past decade, with more than seven African countries meeting UNAIDS targets, Dr. Lule emphasized that Ghana has the potential to join their ranks. With a sustained low HIV prevalence rate of less than 2%, Ghana has made commendable progress, but efforts must be accelerated to ensure further reductions in new infections. He also pointed out the importance of integrated and strong health systems to address the medical needs of vulnerable populations while combating other disease outbreaks.

Dr. Lule called for a renewed commitment to ending AIDS by 2030 through collective action, advocacy, and the protection of human rights, stressing that now is the time to act to ensure a future free of AIDS.

Mr. Joshua Ansah acknowledged the vital role that communities play in addressing HIV-related issues and praised the resilience of those affected by the epidemic. He emphasized the need for continued public awareness campaigns and community-based interventions to reduce new infections. He called for greater collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society, and international partners, to scale up efforts and achieve the goal of ending AIDS by 2030.



Mr. Ansah also reaffirmed the collective resolve to end HIV/AIDS, recognizing that this epidemic touches all aspects of society, including families, workplaces, and communities. He stressed the crucial role of workers' representatives in advocating for workplace policies that address stigma and discrimination, ensuring equitable healthcare access for all, and promoting education and regular testing to prevent new infections.

He highlighted the need for unions to lead in integrating HIV policies into collective agreements, ensuring that diseases like HIV are treated on par with other health conditions. Mr. Ansah called for enhanced anti-stigma campaigns and improved access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare services for all.



He emphasized that by stepping up prevention efforts and advocating for human rights, a healthier and stronger future could be built for all. He concluded with a message of solidarity: "Long live workers' solidarity, and long live Ghana."

Ms. Rhoda Coffie, a renowned HIV advocate, spoke on behalf of Mrs. Elsie Ayeh (Network of Persons Living with HIV (NAP+) with great passion and empathy, sharing her solidarity with those affected by HIV in Ghana. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that people living with HIV are treated with dignity and respect, urging a continued commitment to reducing stigma and discrimination.

She also highlighted the need for increased access to HIV testing, treatment, and care, particularly for marginalized groups, and stressed the importance of comprehensive sexual education as a key component of prevention. She further noted that prevention requires not only access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and regular testing, but also advocacy for policies that address the unique realities of those affected by HIV/AIDS. She reaffirmed that this is a collective responsibility, and together, by dismantling stigma, empowering individuals, and



Ms. Rhoda Coffie
(National Secretary, Network of Persons Living with HIV (NAP+))

fostering solidarity, we can pave the way for an AIDS-free generation.

Ms. Coffie called for united action to ensure a future where no one is left behind. She concluded by urging everyone to step up, advocate, and act towards achieving the goal of an HIV-free world where every individual has the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilled lives.

CONCLUSION

The commemoration of World AIDS Day on December 2, 2024, provided a powerful platform for reflection, solidarity, and renewed commitment to the fight against HIV and AIDS. As highlighted by the various speakers, significant progress has been made in Ghana and globally, but challenges remain in reaching the goal of ending AIDS by 2030. The key messages emphasized the importance of collaboration among government, civil society, international partners, and local communities to address the social, economic, and healthcare barriers that hinder the fight against HIV.









