

HEALTH POLICY PLUS: Ghana

Overview

Health Policy Plus (HP+) is a five-year project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by a consortium of partners, led by Palladium. The project's HIV activities are supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Globally, the project works to strengthen and advance health policy to improve the enabling environment for equitable and sustainable health services, supplies, and delivery systems in the areas of family planning and reproductive health, HIV, and maternal health.

Currently, 1.6 percent of Ghana's general population lives with HIV; in key populations such as female sex workers and men who have sex with men, the incidence is much higher (11.5 percent and 17.5 percent, respectively). Ghana has taken a number of steps to respond to the epidemic including instituting "treat all" guidelines, which call for treatment for all persons living with HIV regardless of CD4 count or stage; developing new policies on task sharing HIV care responsibilities; enacting a robust 2016–2020 Strategic Plan that includes specific interventions for key populations; and creating a roadmap for achieving the country's HIV testing, treatment, and retention targets.

While Ghana has made progress in its response to HIV, more work is needed to ensure the enabling environment supports rights-based interventions. Stigma and discrimination, especially at the health facility level, continue to interfere with HIV testing, treatment, links to other services, viral load suppression, and sustained follow-up care.

Our Work

HP+ Ghana focuses on the following activities:

Designing and implementing stigma and discrimination reduction activities in health facilities

Evidence from a growing body of research demonstrates the negative impact that stigma and discrimination have on the health and behavior of people living with HIV and marginalized populations. Stigma and discrimination manifest in healthcare facilities in a variety of ways: patients are made to wait longer to receive care, which is often sub-standard; patients fear refusal of care; care providers exhibit judgmental attitudes towards patients; and involuntary disclosure is often a concern. Overall, stigma and discrimination prevents persons living with HIV from fully entering and benefiting from the continuum of HIV care, treatment, and prevention.

HP+ Ghana is working closely with the Ghana Health Service/National AIDS Control Program, Ghana AIDS Commission, civil society organizations, health facility staff, and people living with HIV to address these issues by:

- Conducting a comprehensive baseline assessment of stigma and discrimination in 20 health facilities throughout the country
- Collecting information from people living with HIV to capture their first-hand experiences with and perceptions of stigma and discrimination in the health system
- Implementing pilot interventions in five health facilities that include training healthcare

teams to execute a comprehensive package to reduce stigma and discrimination and develop frameworks for sustainable change

- Developing evidence-based recommendations for reducing stigma and discrimination at the facility level through collaboration with stakeholders that can be scaled up throughout the country in future national implementation plans

Using the HP+ HIV policy scan and action planning approach to inform effective policy responses

Understanding how legal, regulatory, and policy environments in Ghana support or hinder the country's HIV response is crucial to informing effective policy responses to the epidemic. Ghana's previous legal assessments, conducted in 2010 and 2011, primarily focused on human rights challenges. HP+ has been tasked with updating these assessments and developing action plans that support implementation of the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan (2016–2020) by utilizing its innovative methodology, the HIV policy scan and action planning approach. In collaboration with stakeholders, HP+ is:

- Providing updates to recommendations made in the 2010 legal environment assessment to reflect changes in national policy, law, and guidelines
- Collaborating with stakeholders to identify and prioritize specific gaps in the continuum of HIV care, treatment, and prevention for further policy analysis and review
- Engaging stakeholders to develop action plans to address gaps in policy and implementation

Conducting a cost analysis of Ghana's efforts to meet 90-90-90 goals

Ghana must scale-up its efforts at all levels of the antiretroviral therapy (ART) program cascade in order to achieve its 90-90-90 testing, treatment, and retention targets by 2020. To help build an evidence base for resource mobilization to scale up testing, treatment, and retention, HP+ conducted a cost analysis of Ghana's ART program cascade and reviewed existing programs to identify promising practices, bottlenecks, and leakages in treatment frameworks. With help from stakeholders, HP+ also collected and analyzed the current and projected costs of ART, health supplies, human resource and supply chain needs, and clinical infrastructure and equipment. The analysis found that it will cost Ghana US\$217 million to achieve its 90-90-90 targets by 2020, with a cost savings of US\$31 million over four years from reducing the resource gap.

For More Information, Contact

HP+

Suneeta Sharma, PhD
Project Director
suneeta.sharma@thepalladiumgroup.com
Tel: +1 (202) 775-9680

HP+ Ghana

Andrew Zapfel
Country Activity Manager
andrew.zapfel@thepalladiumgroup.com
Tel: +1 (202) 775-9680 ext. 1002

Health Policy Plus

1331 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20004
www.healthpolicyplus.com
policyinfo@thepalladiumgroup.com

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