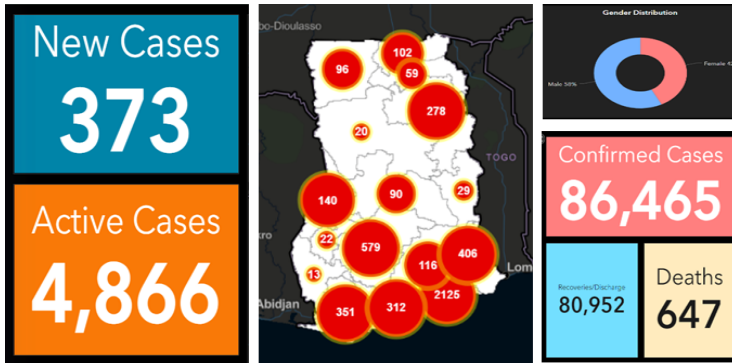




COVID-19 Update: 6

United Nations Support to the Government of Ghana

Situation Update (4th March, 2021)



Region	Cum. cases	Region	Cum. cases	Region	Cum. cases
Greater Accra	48,282	Ashanti	14,954	Western	5,478
Eastern	3,872	Central	3,030	Volta	2,091
Northern	1,458	Bono East	1,237	Upper East	1,232
Bono	1,102	Western North	808	Ahafo	666
Upper West	444	Oti	308	North East	156
Savannah	97	International travellers (KIA)			1,250

UN in Ghana Response Interventions

To help inform the Government and other Development Partners, the United Nations (UN) in Ghana issues this monthly bulletin, a consolidated summary of information on activities in support of the Government of Ghana COVID-19 response efforts. The activities span across nine pillars and this edition covers September and October, 2020.

It is worth noting that the UN Country Team (UNCT), since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported, continues to provide support collectively to the Government of Ghana (GoG) through its expertise and resources to respond to both the Public Health Emergency as well as the immediate socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

Country level co-ordination, planning and monitoring

As the pandemic keeps evolving, the UN's support covers coordination, planning and monitoring towards containing the virus and preventing its spread.

WHO supported the Eastern Regional Health Directorate to activate and manage their Public Health Emergency Management

Key Highlights

- ⇒ WFP supported the Government through the Ghana Health Service (GHS) to build the capacities of health staff on effective nutrition counselling and effective use of SBCC strategies in the context of COVID-19.
- ⇒ UNDP supported Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) to launch results of COVID-19 Local Economies Tracked survey.
- ⇒ Entrepreneurs and MSMEs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic were supported with innovative solutions to fight the pandemic by UNCDF
- ⇒ GHS was supported with some essential nutrition equipment and supplies by UNICEF to help with the early detection and treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition amidst COVID-19.
- ⇒ WHO donated oxygen concentrators and COVID-19 sample collection kits and diagnostic reagents to the MoH to be distributed to the treatment centers in all 16 regions across the country and testing centres respectively.
- ⇒ UNFPA Ghana in partnership with Canada and Merck Foundation supported the Rebecca Foundation, to premier the 'Because I Want To Be' Initiative on TV, an initiative that is empowering adolescent girls through mentorship and alternative skill acquisition.

Committee. Within the reporting period, a total of six (6) Public Health Emergency Committee meetings were held to plan and coordinate the various aspects of pandemic management and response. The Directorate was also supported to conduct monitoring visits to 10 districts in the region to assess and enhance their skills in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at their levels. The region's ability to coordinate the response to the pandemic has since been elevated as they take charge to coordinate meetings and provide enhanced and regular reporting of prevailing COVID-19 epidemiological situation through Situational Reports. The supervisory visits also provided valuable feedback to the district level staff to help address challenges in responding to the pandemic at their level as hands-on training in these areas was not sufficient.



Central Regional Covid-19 Monitoring Team interacting with Mfantseman District Director of Health Services during monitoring visit

To help understand and measure the impact of COVID-19 on financial flows of funding for COVID-19 response and for essential services for front line services institutions including schools, hospitals, community health centre and public toilets, UNICEF in collaboration with the Social Policy Research Institute and National Development Planning Commission commissioned an institutional study in three regions (Accra, Ashanti and Northern regions). The study is expected to help ascertain the changes that service institutions have encountered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gender-sensitive risk communication and community engagement

Making sure no one is left behind is core to the UN operations. As the pandemic continues, deliberate programmes are designed and targeted at the marginalized in society.

WHO supported districts in Central and Eastern regions to undertake risk communication and educational activities on COVID-19 through the use of 89 Community Information Centres, 56 radio stations and 32 community advocacy meetings with youth groups, market women, and fishmongers. Topics including COVID-19 symptoms and signs, mode of transmission, prevention and safety protocols, importance of early reporting, COVID-19 diagnosis and confirmation processes, complications of the virus, and how to seek treatment when infected, among others, were addressed. Through the campaign, community members within the targeted regions were equipped with information about the pandemic to make informed decisions on keeping safe and measures required to reduce transmission of infection which ultimately are expected to contribute to lower infection rates.

Targeting children with communication on COVID-19 safety protocols to help prevent the spread of the virus, UNICEF made adjustments to on-going Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) programming to include broader COVID-19 protocols and risk communication. Through that, a total of 20,000 people in 130 communities were reached with communication on COVID-19 preventative measures, including hand hygiene.

UNICEF continues to support the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service (GES) on the country's first intensive, comprehensive radio distance learning programme. Recordings of all 350 scripts have been completed and are currently being edited for broadcasting. To complement the radio lessons, worksheets have been designed, reviewed and finalized for use by learners with their caregivers' support.

UNICEF and partners have also conducted community-based psychosocial support services in the context of COVID-19 to about 1,000 communities across the country to help reduce stress and anxiety as a result of the pandemic. Field facilitators engaged parents and caregivers, children and adolescents

within their communities through Community Information Centers, information vans as well as schools, home visits, and small group discussions, such as Safe Space meetings with adolescent girls to help manage stress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 104,135 people (Girls-22,464, Boys-21,191, Women-32,400, Men- 28,080) were reached during the reporting period and cumulatively a total of 761,595 people have been reached.

UNDP supported the Ghana Health Service to strengthen risk communication and community engagements on COVID-19 for vulnerable populations including persons with disability, people living with HIV and the prisons in 160 districts across the country. A total of 14,352 (8624 males, and 5728 females) persons with disability, including the visually impaired, physically challenged, hearing impaired, mentally challenged and lepers from the 160 districts across the country were empowered with relevant COVID-19 information. In addition, 613 (266 males and 347 females) persons living with HIV (PLHIV) and 227 (145 males and 82 females) prison officials and wardens from various prisons across the country including James Camp Prison, Awutu Camp Prison, Ho central prison, Ho female Prison, Kpando Local Prison, Tamale Central Prison, Koforidua Local Prison, Akuse male and female prisons and Tarkwa prisons have also been empowered with relevant information on hand hygiene, mask wearing, respiratory etiquette and importance of treatment adherence during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 598,000 persons (252,000 males, and 346,000 females) were also reached with COVID-19 prevention information through the Community Information Centres in selected districts across the country.

UNDP has also supported with the development of materials in disability friendly formats to help sensitize the marginalized in society about the pandemic. Providing targeted COVID-19 prevention for the vulnerable in disability friendly formats (including braille and sign language) ensures that they are equipped with relevant information and tools to protect themselves from infection and ensures that no one is left behind. A module on COVID-19 prevention in the prisons and COVID-19 educational material in Braille have been developed and distributed. A total of 2,000 COVID-19 material in Braille have been distributed to the visually impaired including those in schools for the blind in the Eastern and Central regions.

To help support the Government's effort to sensitize the public on the dangers of COVID-19 stigmatization and to campaign against stigmatization of persons or families infected with the COVID-19 virus, UNDP produced two animation videos for streaming on social and traditional media.

UNFPA Ghana supported the Purim African Youth Development (PADYP) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) to outdoor 40 adolescent paralegals. Paralegals are the liaison between the communities and the state agencies responsible to protecting women and girls against abuse.

Once out-dooed, they are to lead the fight against child marriage and other harmful practices which are more likely to be perpetuated during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The ceremony afforded community members the opportunity to know the paralegals in order to easily call on them during times of need and help in advocacy during this period.

UNFPA Ghana in partnership with Canada and Merck Foundation have supported the Rebecca Foundation, to premier the 'Because I Want To Be' Initiative on TV. The initiative was initially through physical engagements organized in communities across the coastal areas of Ghana but was adapted to the television screens in the wake of COVID-19. It is targeted at empowering adolescent girls through mentorship and alternative skill acquisition. The show is estimated to reach 2million plus viewers, with a target listening group of 500 and a direct engagement of about 200 girls. The show brings together adolescent girls, mentors and celebrities to empower girls on topics such as values, health and COVID-19, adolescent development and etiquettes, among others, to empower adolescent girls.

The Henry Djaba Foundation in collaboration with UNFPA Ghana, the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations and other partners held the 1000 wheelchairs campaign to purchase wheelchairs and walking aids for persons living with disability and provide COVID-19 information. Over 180 PPEs including nose masks were handed out alongside COVID-19 information to persons living with disability. This was done to ensure that no one is left behind in accessing PPEs and on credible information on prevention of COVID-19.

UNFPA supported the Youth Advocates Ghana to organize the 3rd African Youth SDGs Summit: a platform for young people to deliberate on the theme, 'Securing the 2030 commitment beyond the post COVID-19 era. The summit provided a hybrid platform for discussions on various issues on the SDGs, COVID-19 information and skills to build resilience of the young people during and after the pandemic period. Over 15, 000 from more than 50 countries were reached.

IOM and six partner civil society organizations (CSOs) continued to promote safe migration and raise awareness on COVID-19 protection protocols outlined by the Government of Ghana. These activities took place in the following regions: Bono, Bo-

no East, Northern, Ahafo, Ashanti and Western, and were supported through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

Surveillance, rapid response teams and case investigation

Surveillance is key to containing the virus and the various UN Agencies continue to support the Government through its implementing agencies to build a robust surveillance system to appropriately respond and contain the virus.

WHO supported the Eastern Regional Health Directorate to train their Rapid Response Teams, Contact Tracers and aided prompt transportation of COVID-19 samples from the region to Accra for testing. Onsite technical support was also provided to 10 selected districts on sample collection, contact listing and transportation of samples to the laboratory. A total of 240 rapid response personnel were trained on COVID-19 Surveillance activities. These aided in early case detection, effective contact tracing and adherence to safety protocols as they are key to reducing community transmission. The capacity strengthening support also aided laboratory staff and surveillance officers to have the needed capacity to detect cases and promptly link to care. Improved contact tracing activity led to the detection of 716 confirmed cases with identification of 4359 contacts within the 10 districts supported.

WHO also supported the Central Regional Health Directorate with essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), to conduct contact tracing and implement risk communication activities.

FAO supported the Veterinary Service Directorate (VSD) of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) to train 32 staff from the VSD, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the GHS on Good Emergency Management Practices (GEMP) using One Health Approach. The training-of-trainers (ToT) focused on using the principles of GEMP in the preparation, prevention, control and response to transboundary disease threats including COVID-19 in the country. The downstream training then followed the ToT, segmented in two zones; the coastal and the middle zones.

Point of Entry

In making sure the entry points maintained the recommended standards to prevent the spread of the virus, WHO conducted two (2) observatory visits to Kotoka International Airport to monitor services and implementation of the COVID-19 safety protocols for arriving passengers for trouble shooting and quick identification of gaps and challenges to avoid the importation of positive cases into the country and subsequent prop-



IOM integrated COVID-19 awareness into its safe migration campaigns (photo: IOM Ghana)



WHO staff interacting with Port Health Staff during Observatory visit to KIA

agation of community transmission. Massive queuing and delays in test results were observed and were brought to the attention of the relevant stakeholders for resolution.

National Laboratories

To help strengthen the capabilities of laboratories conducting the COVID-19 test, WHO donated COVID-19 sample collection kits and diagnostic reagents to the Ministry of Health. The items donated included 450,000 throat and nasal swabs and nucleic acid extractors for PCR testing for onward distribution to the COVID-19 testing centres. The throat and nasal swabs are to facilitate sample collection from suspected COVID-19 patients for COVID-19 testing while the nucleic acid extractors will strengthen the testing capacity of the Laboratory Network to quickly detect cases that can be timely linked to care and improve outcome.



WHO Staff donating COVID-19 Items to MOH

Infection prevention and control

Infection prevention and control (IPC) is critical at this time against the fight of the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO, UNOPS,

UNICEF, and UNDP during the reporting period supported the Government to help contain the virus and/or prevent the spread of the virus through infection prevention and control supported activities.

WHO supported Greater Accra and Eastern Regional Health Directorates to build the capacities of health staff on infection prevention and control (IPC) practices related to COVID-19. A total of 40 clinical health staff were trained as trainers-of-trainers while 2,165 clinical frontline health staff and 845 non-clinical health staff were trained on the recommended IPC practices across Greater Accra and Eastern regions. The hospitality industry was not left out, as 50 hotel staff in New Juaben North and South were also trained on recommended IPC practices. The skills gained in IPC has aided in the practice of the relevant infection measures in the respective health facilities and hotels. This is expected to greatly reduce disease transmission from health staff to patients and from patient to patient in the health facilities and within the hotels between staff and guest.

WHO also donated essential supplies and PPEs including different varieties of gloves, disposable head covers, reusable face shield, medical masks, N95 masks, goggles, disposable coverall



Demonstration of PPE donning and doffing as part of IPC training at St Dominic Hospital, Akwatia, Eastern

gowns. among others, to four (4) major treatment centres (Trauma Hospital, Dunkwa Government Hospital, Cape Coast Metro Hospital and Ajumako Hospital) in the Central region. This is expected to prevent and/or reduce the transmission of the virus.

UNDP supported waste collectors and pickers with PPEs including over 2500 pairs of gloves, 3000 face shields, and 205 packs of nose masks to help them protect themselves amidst the pandemic.

UNOPS is in the process of procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including Face Shield, Goggles, N95 Masks, Aprons (Surgical Gowns), and laboratory equipment namely Automated RNA Extraction systems and PCR Machines to Ministry of Health (MOH) in their response to the pandemic. This is expected to enhance essential health services to help address the growing burden of COVID-19 pandemic by strengthening capacity of the Ministry of Health in the areas of preven-

tion, diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19, reducing COVID-19 transmission and increasing safety within health facilities and communities.

UNICEF in collaboration with other members of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), supported the government to conduct mOPV2 campaigns in some high-risk regions (eight regions) in Ghana. More than four million children under the age of five years have been vaccinated against the Poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) during the two rounds of campaigns. Intense social mobilisation and vaccine management were conducted during the campaign in accordance to COVID-19 protocols; provision of face masks and hand sanitizers to protect volunteers, health workers, children and care givers from contracting COVID-19. The campaign in part was to ensure that, children did not miss out on vaccination during COVID-19 pandemic.

IOM supported a group of returnees spread across Greater Accra, Bono East, Central and Ashanti regions to produce a total of 4,000 certified nose masks in line with the standards of the Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana (FDA). The production of certified nose masks contributed towards the Government of Ghana's national COVID-19 response, as well as helped people to protect themselves and others from the virus. This intervention was supported through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

Effective case management positively impacts on case recovery



Returnees produce nose masks with from IOM and the European Union (photo: IOM Ghana)

Case Management

and reduces mortalities especially those in containment centres.

During the reporting period, WHO donated 55 oxygen concentrators to the Ministry of Health to be distributed to the treatment centers in all 16 regions across the country. Pre-positioning of these oxygen concentrators in treatment centers across the country would easily make available oxygen to peo-

ple who are severe and critical thereby reducing mortality and morbidity.



Central Region case management team on monitoring visit to Cape Coast Municipal Hospital

WHO also supported the Central Regional Health Directorate to conduct supportive supervision and monitoring visits to health facilities handling suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19. Six (6) designated COVID-19 treatment and six (6) other holding facilities in the region were assessed on COVID-19 case management protocols. The visiting regional team mentored and coached facility teams on operational challenges identified and offered recommendations to facility management to enhance service provision for improved patient outcomes. One hundred and seventy-seven (177) out of the 179 COVID-19 cases that were reported and tracked at the time of reporting, totally recovered.

Operational Support and Logistics

Efficient management of supplies and logistics is key to winning the fight against COVID-19. WHO, during the reporting period conducted training for the Health Commodities Group of the Ministry of Health on the use of the WHO COVID-19 Stock Management Tool. A total of 12 members of the Health Commodities Group were trained. The use of the tool will help provide information on available essential PPEs, diagnostics and medicines at a glance while ensuring proper management of stocks to avoid shortages and wastages.

UNICEF donated Veronica buckets and other supplies to the Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources for distribution to schools in the Greater Accra region to ensure that children are protected in schools and there is continuity of essential nutrition services in the context of COVID-19.

UNICEF also supported the government with essential nutrition equipment and supplies including anthropometric equipment and therapeutic foods for early detection and treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition.

UNFPA handed over a renovated domestic violence shelter and provided office equipment to the domestic violence secretariat of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. This

was to ensure that the country is adequately prepared to respond to cases of sexual and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a practical commitment in ending all forms of violence against women and girls and ensuring that a safe space was available for survivors to seek redress and safety.

Supportive Social Service

Continuation of social services is crucial for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic as it serves as life line for most people especially the vulnerable population. In view of that, the UN is ensuring all life saving social services or activities are continued with modified protocols to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infections. During this reporting period, UNCDF, UNDP, and WFP undertook activities in support to social services or government strategies.

As a technical agency and in its role of market facilitator to accelerate the development of inclusive economies, UNCDF supported entrepreneurs and MSMEs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and also supported those beneficiaries with innovative solutions to fight the pandemic.

UNCDF is also working on scaling up private led initiatives aimed at using digital solutions while ensuring social distancing: in early 2020, as per a coordinated effort from the United Nations to have a response towards the COVID-19 pandemic, UNCDF has launched a Request for Applications (RfA) to collaborate with private sector actors in Ghana, leveraging the power of digital technologies to help MSMEs during the confinement period and prepare them to better exploit opportunities in the “post-COVID 19 digital economies”. By leveraging a range of technical expertise and investment instruments, UNCDF has made available two solutions: (1) 7-in-1 digital insurance that covers the risks related to the life insurance of the MSME owner to minimize the risk of COVID-19, and (2) simple point-of-sale solution to sell cashless (online, mobile and in-store) and deliver their goods to customers without contact.

UNDP in partnership with the Ghana Statistical Service launched findings from the COVID-19 Local Economies Tracked survey. The findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic has had both economic and social effects on local communities, resulting in increase in crime, domestic violence, prices, and low business productivity. The survey results also revealed that localities witnessed an increase in crime during the country’s COVID-19 lockdown period, with about three out of ten communities (34.1%) experiencing a rise in crime, such as theft and burglary. This was followed by an increase in domestic violence (3.7%) and assaults (3.1%) in communities. In addition, the COVID-19 restrictions also affected businesses in the local communities, with seven to eight out of ten businesses experiencing reduction in production (71.7%) and sales (89.7%) respectively. The businesses also witnessed a reduc-

tion in labour supply (36.0%), and prices of goods and cost of credit increased. The findings are to help inform policy interventions in managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNDP and its partners also launched “For Better Business Together (4BBT)” programme to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and COVID-19 economic recovery in Ghana. The initiative is seeking to inspire business worthy behaviours, create entrepreneurship centres across Ghana to connect youth with innovative ideas to entrepreneurs, and catalyze investments towards the achievement of the SDGs. A key component of the 4BBT initiative is SDGs Investor Maps, which will connect investment opportunities to investors across Ghana.

WFP supported the government to build the capacities of over 70 health staff on effective nutrition counselling on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices as well as promotion of healthy eating among the general population through the use of effective Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategies in the context of COVID-19. The staff trained, including Community Health Nurses and Midwives, were well-



Training of Health Workers on effective nutrition counselling on Infant and Young child feeding practices in the context of covid-19

equipped with the skills to counsel pregnant women and caregivers of children 0-23 months on the best IYCF practices and consumption of nutritious foods to help prevent malnutrition as the pandemic evolves.

UNFPA Ghana with support from Prudential Life Insurance Ghana empowered 500 vulnerable girls through the ‘Kayayei’ Assistance Project (KASPRO) on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights education (SRHR), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the provision of vocational skills. KASPRO was designed to demonstrate effective, workable approaches in addressing the dynamics and needs of vulnerable populations, specifically ‘Kayayei’ during and after a humanitarian crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. All 500 beneficiaries have also been enrolled on the National Health Insurance Scheme to protect their health and wellbeing.