



UNITED NATIONS AND PARTNERS JOIN HANDS TO FILL THE GAP IN GHANA'S COVID-19 NATIONAL RESPONSE

The United Nations in Ghana is providing life-saving support in high burden regions as it compliments Ghana's national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a year into the pandemic, many countries, including Ghana, are still grappling to control the pandemic as well as address its socio-economic impact. Even though the arrival of the COVAX vaccine brings relief and hope, the pandemic is far from over and precautionary measures to curb its spread remain in place.

Throughout the crisis, the United Nations in Ghana, through its COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) and the Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan (SERRP), has provided extensive support to the Government of Ghana. This has included the provision of relevant and much needed health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies. This includes training of health workers and ensuring access to other essential health services, such as sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS care; access to WASH supplies and services to enhance the infection prevention control measures in education and health institutions and public places. The UN's approach has been to strengthen existing national capacities to accelerate an effective health system response, which is gender-sensitive and leaves no one behind, to prevent and limit devastating consequences.

"The UN has stood with Ghana since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. We adjusted our support to Ghana in the face of the pandemic with the introduction of the CPRP and our SERRP which are aligned to Government priorities – seeking to address the health challenges, mitigate the socio-economic impacts, and support Ghana to build back better." Says the UN Resident Coordinator for Ghana, Mr. Charles Abani, adding that "We shall continue to do so until we see the end of this pandemic".

As part of this, in August 2020, the UN in Ghana received funding support through the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF) of the World Bank. The PEF is "a financing mechanism designed to provide an additional source of financing to help the world's poorest countries respond to cross-border, large-scale outbreaks." Since then, the participating UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP and UNFPA), partnering with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Ghana Red Cross Society have worked closely with the government to limit the spread of the virus and provided much-needed boost in early case identification and management of COVID-19 cases in high burden regions.

This joint programme focuses on four key areas:

Health – working through WHO, the project has made it possible for the supply of critical health necessities to 55 functional unequipped isolation/treatment facilities across the country and expansion of training of health staff for improved quality of care and contact tracing. This has positively impacted Ghana’s response efforts, strengthening health systems thereby contributing to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) - working through UNICEF and with the IFRC, much work has gone into improving WASH facilities in schools, health centers and communities. The goal is to ensure that health facilities schools are equipped with IPC measures (hand washing facilities, hygiene supplies and water and sanitation infrastructure). Trainings were provided to key school teachers in developing Facility Management Plans and their execution for appropriately manage the WASH facilities. A total of 60 health facilities and 170 schools were reached with critical WASH supplies and services, enhancing the capacity of over 6,000 outpatients, and estimated 35,000 school children to protect themselves from and prevent spread of COVID-19. Project support also benefitted high-risk urban communities and targeted public places with improved access to WASH.

‘There is much more to do since schools reopened and the upsurge in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country. Ghana Red Cross continues to provide much-needed support to communities at the highest risk for COVID-19. Through World Bank’s support, so far, we have been able to reach 27,000 people in 30 informal settlements with improved access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services’ said Francis Salako, Acting Head, West Coast Cluster - IFRC.

Food security & social protection - Through this mechanism, the UN is also supporting the launch of a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) in Ghana, eleven years after the last national assessment was undertaken in 2009. Over 800 enumerators were trained to conduct nationwide field Data Collection across all the 260 districts. Data analysis is ongoing and stakeholder validation/consultations workshops are expected to be carried out in Southern and Northern Ghana before the findings are released later in the year.

To curb stigmatization and *sexual and gender-based violence*, observed as prevalent particularly during this period of the pandemic, the joint programme built the capacity of national and sub-national institutions, strengthened community-level structures and systems and improved access and utilization of Sexual and Gender-



Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and response services for vulnerable people in all settings. Specifically, dignity kits were distributed, two Standard Operating Procedures for two shelters were developed, and an interactive mobile application. Known as BOAME was introduced. The App responds to SGBV issues and provides appropriate support leveraging technology and artificial intelligence. With this tool, an estimated 50, 000 users will be reached by April 2021. The SGBV Call Centre also received needed support to provide services (both walk-in and remote) for survivors of SGBV and harmful practices.

