
2022 Quarter 3 Newsletter

West Africa AIDS Foundation & International Healthcare Center

2022 Quarter 3

YOUTH PLUS APP with UNFPA & YHAG

Engaging like-minded youth with Youth Plus App.

Re-engineering the digital space with **Youth Plus App**
An app providing health and psychosocial information for young people living with HIV



The United Nations Development Program, UNDP Ghana office in consultation with the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) and the Young Health Advocates - Ghana (YHAG), joined an IT Developer who developed and designed a mobile application specifically for young persons living with HIV to enhance their accessibility to relevant health information to enhance care across the HIV cascade for this target group. The APP was named Youth+ (Positive living) app. The idea for an HIV related app, specifically for this target group was birthed from the realization by this age group that they lacked access to age specific information on HIV and hence many a time struggled to make informed decisions.

Dr. Vanderpuye -Donton, CEO of WAAF and a clinician with over 15 years of experience in HIV care and treatment, was contracted by UNDP-Ghana to provide content for the APP whilst Mr. Justice Akpadie, the IT Developer, was tasked with the design of all APP's features and subsequently, provide support and maintenance. The Youth Plus app has a user-friendly interface and is carefully designed to provide young people between the ages of 13 – 30 years with relevant age specific HIV information as well as referrals for more expert care. Examples of features available on the APP are general information on the basics of HIV, preventing other conditions whilst living with HIV, a list of all ART sites in the country and their locations, peer-to-peer chats where users of the app can chat among themselves and provide support for one another. Mentors and experts are also accessible on the app with whom users can book appointments for virtual or physical meetings.

Integrated in the development of the APP was the assurance of security for its users. Access to the app is therefore secured by a registration and account creation process that is approved by an approver. Other properties like HIV statistics, ARV & Medication, education on COVID 19 and vaccination, abuse and bullying, violence and discrimination, alcohol and drugs, diet and health, IQ test, Board games and other related resources are meant to educate whilst entertaining users. The App can be found on the google play store for all android users and will soon also be available on the App store for iPhone users.

The goal is to have as many as possible from the target age group download and use the APP then eventually take over the management of its content which will enhance outcomes across the HIV cascade for this group. We are very grateful to the government of Japan through JICA and UNDP for providing the resources to make this very important tool available. We also thank Mr. Justice Akpadie for his great work in designing a very user-friendly APP and Dr. Vanderpuye -Donton for the great and relevant content.

Closing of EPIC PROJECT Phase II and Start of Phase III



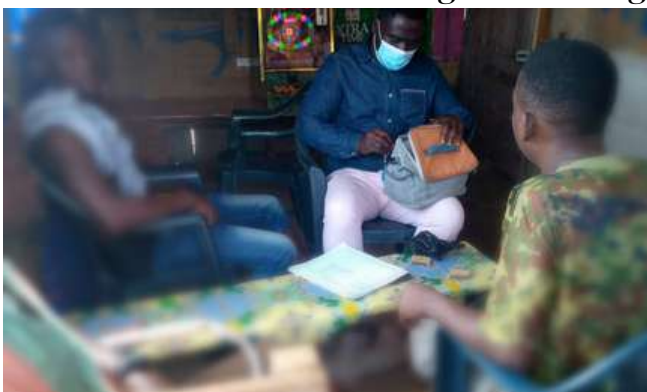
WAAF, IHCC, WIYO & PORSH IN AN EPIC REFRESHER TRAINING

WAAF and its second-tier organizations successfully closed out phase I of the EpiC project, which started in October 2020 and ended in September 2021. The project focuses on meeting targets and maintaining Epidemic Control through HIVST and PrEP uptake and ensures people who are HIV infected are linked to care. With the help of our clinic, the International Health Care Centre (IHCC) and second-tier organizations; World Youth International Organization (WIYO) and Priorities of Rights and Sexual Health (PORSH), most of the targets were met and some even exceeded.

Thanks to WAAF's impressive performance, we were awarded a phase II of the project and continued to work with the International Health Care Centre and two second tier organizations.

Key aspects of the project are the introduction of QuickRes, an online application used by EpiC Ghana project that allows KP clients to book appointments to receive PrEP and HIVST services either at IHCC or any of our second-tier organization offices or using mobile clinic services within a convenient location. During phase II [NAV1] [WC2] a total of 923 HIV Self - Test Kits HIVST kits were distributed and 920 of them were used. A total of 130 KPs were confirmed positive of which 126 were linked to ART. In addition, 766 KPs were screened for PrEP of which, 747 were eligible and were all initiated on PrEP against the much less target of 602. As at the end of phase II, 464 KPs continue to take PrEP representing a 62.5% PrEP continuation rate.

Saving Lives through Effective HIV Peer Education



Peer education is an approach in HIV care and treatment to promote health-enhancing behavioral change among peers. On the Care Continuum Project where the West Africa AIDS Foundation is a sub grantee under JSI, volunteers are also known as peer educators who give education on HIV and related services such as HIV testing, PrEP, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence and sexually transmitted infections.

A peer educator by short name, K.K., visited a spiritual and traditional healing camp known as Nakaba in the Alukulenu community as part of his usual activities to

educate people on HIV and its related services. During the visit, he met Kweku (not his real name) who indicated that he was at the camp seeking treatment for an unknown illness because he had visited multiple health facilities but had still not found a remedy. Kweku talked about multiple laboratory tests and ultrasound scans he had to undergo to diagnose his condition. All efforts were to no avail. This compelled him to seek spiritual help at the camp.

The peer educator upon probing, discovered that Kweku had never been tested for HIV. Also recognizing signs of possible opportunistic infections, K.K. became determined to convince Kweku to agree to an HIV test. Unfortunately, Kweku refused to be tested for HIV. Realizing that a practical example would be needed, K.K. told Kweku a story about a woman who found herself in a similar situation and had to test for HIV. The test revealed the true cause of her ordeal. Kweku upon hearing this story, agreed to be tested for HIV. His result turned out to be positive to HIV.

Thanks to thorough HIV counseling, Kweku accepted the result and was linked to care at a nearby hospital. Kweku immediately started his HIV treatment and promised to remain in care.

Kweku said, "I have finally come to know what has been troubling me all the while. At least now I know what was wrong with me and I'm learning how to stay healthy despite my HIV+ status."

Ghana Key Population Unique Identification System (GKPUIS) Training in Accra and Western Region Respectively



In August 2022, FHI 360 and JSI in the Greater Accra and Western regions respectively organized a three-day training on GKPUIS facilitated by the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC). The training sessions brought together participants from WAAF (Western region and Greater Accra) together with second tier organization (PORSH, and WIYO) in the two regions respectively. The purpose of this training was to build the capacity of volunteers and various project teams' staff to enable them to use the national HIV data system developed by the GAC.

During this training, participants were taken through the overview of GKPUIS, the reason the system was developed, the importance of GKPUIS and how the system generally works.

System administrators were selected and trained to manage their organization's GKPUIS system. They were trained on how to create accounts for Peer Educators, PrEP Champions, Case Managers and Lay counsellors as well as how to review data entries made by volunteers before approving them. Peer Educators and PrEP Champions were also trained on how to capture data of peers they reach into the GKPUIS and generate unique identification codes for them while Lay Counsellors and Case Managers were taught to input services provided to reactive clients in the system using the unique identification code.

All participants were taken through data safety, security and safeguarding to ensure that unauthorized people do not get access to data or information on GKPUIS.

JSI Recognizes WAAF's Effort on Strengthening the Care Continuum Project

WAAF being an implementing partner on the USAID Strengthening the Care Continuum project, was awarded for its outstanding work on the project to ensure all persons have access to HIV, prevention, care and treatment since 2016



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WAAF PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR PLHIV

HIV is no longer the life-threatening disease it once was, but people living with HIV still need strong social, emotional, and family support.

HIV is characterized by high levels of stigmatization therefore, finding people to confide in safely will not only help normalize living with HIV, but also helps to overcome everyday challenges including treatment, prevention, relationships, and general well-being.

At a time when digital interactions have become the social norm, online support groups seem to be the way to go. They offer one of the best ways to meet other people living with HIV in a safely. One example is where WAAF team in Cape Coast organized an online dialogue session for 25 project beneficiaries living with HIV. The dialogue session covered Medication Refill, Treatment Failure and its consequences, discussion on Viral load and the need for testing, other related issues such as default from treatment, stigma and discrimination, etc. Participants shared experiences during the Q & A session where case managers present answered questions and gave suitable solutions to the questions. Issues and questions that needed referrals were noted for further discussions on how best they can be resolved. They also provided education on index testing, which is one of the strategies used in finding new HIV infections. They were briefed on how best they can make the contacts of their sexual partners available for the HIV Testing Services.



St. Catherine University Donates Medical Items to IHCC



Program Coordinators from the St. Catherine University, Minneapolis in the United States paid a working visit to the West Africa AIDS Foundation in Accra ahead of the arrival of their student who was scheduled to undertake her internship with WAAF. The visit was to inspect our facility to ensure a smooth internship experience for their student. The St. Catherine university was kind to donate some clinical items to support the work of our onsite clinic, the International Health Care Centre (IHCC). The New Birth Midwifery in Minnesota also made a cash donation to support IHCC to support us in purchasing a new Ultrasound Machine. Anne Ness, the student, during her internship with WAAF-IHCC also donated a mini-ECG machine to help monitor the heart rate of clients when they come to the clinic to access care.

The management of the West Africa AIDS Foundation and the International Health Care Centre remain grateful to the St. Catherine University, New Birth Midwifery in Minneapolis, and Anne Ness for their generous support towards our work.



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UCEAP SUMMER SCHOOL



WAAF is an organization that has been working in the area of HIV, AIDS, TB and other STIs for decades. The organization continues to host students for internships. As an internship hub, WAAF hosts students to carry out Summer School practicum. In this quarter, WAAF hosted Students from the University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP) on a summer school program. It started with series of lectures at the University of Ghana International House for about a week covering Organization of Health Services in Ghana and Community Health Planning and Service (CHPS) in Ghana, reasons for it and achievements, HIV policies and services as well as HIV counselling.



This was followed by three Focus Group Discussions. The first two FGDs was held with clients from IHCC and beneficiaries of the various projects WAAF implements. The third focus group discussion was focusing on the students interviewing key management staff of WAAF on what they do daily as well as what their experiences have been working with WAAF and its beneficiaries. Overall, the students spent time with the West Africa AIDS Foundation and the International Health Care Centre team to learn more about the HIV landscape in Ghana and what it takes to work in the area of HIV in Ghana.

IMPAACT4C19

People with underlying conditions like HIV and Tuberculosis are among those at higher risk of both contracting COVID-19 as well as developing complications. In Ghana, such people are a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination. However, many PLHIV are hesitant to be vaccinated due to the fear of having to disclose their status and later face fear of stigma and discrimination. Although COVID-19 diagnostic sites are available in health facilities, they come at a cost, which many Ghanaians are not able to afford. This could be their predicament when they fail to get vaccinated. Towards ensuring that COVID-19 tests and vaccination are easily available, accessible and affordable, WAAF in partnership with Joncaring Foundation (JCF) were awarded a grant by the Treatment Action Group (TAG) to implement an advocacy project; entitled: IMPAACT4C19; “Community Advocacy and Demand Creation for COVID-19 Diagnostics and Therapeutics”. This project is expected to be implemented from February 2022 through December 2022. The project generally aims at complementing Ghana’s COVID-19 efforts, in ensuring access to COVID-19 testing for all especially the vulnerable and the most at risk.



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NHIS Registrations Under NFM III

To ensure equal access to health care, a right for all Ghanaians, the WAAF team in the Central Region of Ghana implementing the Global NFM III project have registered and renewed most at-risk peers on the National Health Insurance Scheme with funding from the Global Fund NFM III project through WAPCAS. Four hundred and fifty-four (454) peers were offered various services on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in all eight districts where WAAF is implementing the Global Fund NFM III project. Peers are still being sensitized and mobilized to continue enrolling on the NHIS. The following high-risk peers were enrolled on NHIS within the various implementing sites:

- Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly- 117
- Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirim-56
- Agona West Municipal -45
- Efutu Municipal -53
- Awutu Senya East Municipal -78
- Assin Fosu Municipal -38
- Upper Denkyira East ON OFFIN -67



USAID PAYS A SIMS VISIT TO WAAF'S CLINIC



A team from USAID paid a Site Improvement through Monitoring Systems (SIMS) visit to the West Africa AIDS Foundation and its onsite clinic; the International Health Care Centre (IHCC). The visit was to assess documentation and the facility's performance on PrEP service delivery to Key Populations on the Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EPIC) project funded by the USAID through FHI-360. The objectives of this SIMS visit were to:

1. To assess the HIV services that IHCC provides to key populations as well as the general public to improve the PEPFAR program.
2. Assess the availability of commodities, standard operating procedures, guidelines, policies, job aids and flow charts that enable high quality delivery of HIV services to our patrons.

At the end of the assessment, WAAF's clinic; the International Health Care Centre scored 88% overall. One of the recommendation from the visit was to improve documentation on feedback from clients and ensure they addressed. Example, the clinic is to explore ways by which clients can give feedback/complaints anonymously even when they are offsite. They also suggested a register to track feedback/complaints received as evidence that all complaints and suggestions from the clients were addressed with actions taken.

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Monkey Pox Virus

Monkey pox is a viral zoonosis (a virus transmitted to humans from animals and between humans) with symptoms like those seen in the past in smallpox patients, although it is clinically less severe.

Human monkey pox was first identified in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a 9-month-old boy in a region where smallpox had been eliminated in 1968. Since then, most cases that have been reported came from regions mostly from central and West Africa. Later, some few cases were reported in the USA and South Africa which were linked to animal trade from Africa to those countries.

Symptoms of Monkey Pox

People with monkey pox get a rash that could be located on hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth and other areas such as genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole)

- The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.
- The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy.

Other symptoms of monkey pox can include:

- Fever, Chills, Exhaustion, Muscle aches and backache, Headache, Respiratory symptoms (e.g. sore throat, nasal congestion, or cough). One of the significant differential signs is enlargement of lymph nodes
- Sometimes, people have flu-like symptoms before the rash.
- Some people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms.
- Others only experience a rash.
- You may experience all or only a few of the symptoms
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Prevention

To lower your overall risk of being infected with and spreading the monkey pox virus or sexually transmitted infections, we recommend: using condoms, practicing safe sex and having fewer sexual partners, particularly those who are anonymous, even when they don't have symptoms.

Some smallpox vaccines can prevent monkey pox, including the ACAM2000 and Jynneos vaccines. These vaccines can be used to prevent monkey pox because related viruses cause smallpox and monkey pox. Health care providers may suggest that people who have been exposed to monkey pox are vaccinated.



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Photo Gallery



WAF **iHCC**

Prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) is the sure way

to prevent HIV transmission from HIV infected mothers to unborn babies.

WAF **iHCC**

When should I start taking ARVs?

As soon as you test positive for HIV. Beginning treatment as soon as possible can help prevent complications and untimely death.

iHCC **WAF**

All Children Living With HIV Should Be And Remain On Treatment

parents and guardians must ensure their children are receiving care

GET INTOUCH WITH WAAF & IHCC

WAAF and IHCC enjoy servicing the people of Ghana; we continue to ensure our services are available to all and that absolutely no one is left behind. We also enjoy sharing our experiences as we continue our journey in the areas of health in Ghana focusing on HIV and TB. You can reach us and keep in touch with us via any of the under-listed contact details. We look forward to an exciting year in 2021 and you can follow our work on these same platforms.

PHYSICAL OFFICE ADDRESSES

WAAF Headquarters, Greater

Accra Address: Plot 650 Ecomog Road, Haatso, Greater Accra.
Opposite Benab Oil filling station. The closest station is Haatso Station.
Contact Numbers: +233 302 545 054 | +233 243 362 447
Please direct general inquiries to: info@waafweb.org

WAAF Western Regional Office

WAAF Takoradi Office GI18,
Adjoa Ghartey Street Near Mexico Hotel
GPS Address: WS-201-7442
Contact number: 0249354576/ 0245021821/ 0243362447
Email: info@waafweb.org

WAAF Essiama Office

Essiama on top of the Ecobank Building opposite Dukes filling Station
GPS Address: WE-0206-7313
Contact number: 0553964934/ 0249354576/ 0243362447
Email: info@waafweb.org

WAAF, Northern Regional Office

Address: Savelugu Municipal Health Assembly
Contact Number: 0243675303/ 0243362447
Email: info@waafweb.org

WAAF Central Regional Offices

- Kasoa Nyanyayo Road near Teacher's quarters
- Winneba – Apam Road Opp. Dukes Filling Station
- Cape Coast – Akyeano Near Cherubim and Searphim School
- Assin Fosu Town Around Melcom
- Dunkwa Field Office, Dunkwa Atechem Boass road

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