

# WEST AFRICA AIDS FOUNDATION & INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARE CENTRE

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## Featured Articles

- UCEAP Students Engage with WAAF-IHCC to Explore Public Health Realities in Ghana
- First Lady Lordina Mahama and Ghana AIDS Commission Host Free Medical Health Screening in Accra
- WAAF HIV Prevention Lecture at The University of Ghana
- HIV Awareness Meeting: Educating for Prevention and Healthy Living
- Coming Together to Learn and Be Empowered: Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Counseling



# UCEAP Students Engage with WAAF-IHCC to Explore Public Health Realities in Ghana



As part of their 2025 Summer Program in Ghana, students from the University of California Education Abroad Program (UC-EAP) had the opportunity to spend time with the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) and International Health Care Center (IHCC), engaging with real-world public health issues through lectures, discussions, and firsthand interaction.

Led by public health expert Dr. Vera Opata, students were introduced to the structure of Ghana's health system and the delivery of primary healthcare services, with a focus on

diseases of public health importance such as HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, Malaria, Diabetes, and Breast Cancer. Dr. Opata provided critical insights into the epidemiology of these diseases in Ghana and their impact on community health outcomes, especially in underserved populations. During their time with the WAAF-

IHCC team, students also gained a deeper understanding of the Foundation's mission and programming. They were given an overview of WAAF's work in HIV prevention, care, and treatment, as well as its support services for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and vulnerable populations who are often disproportionately affected by health disparities and social stigma. A particularly impactful session was a moderated discussion with invited guests—a person living with HIV and individuals from the LGBTQI+ community—who courageously shared their lived experiences navigating healthcare, stigma, and resilience. These heartfelt stories gave students a unique opportunity to understand the psychosocial and social dimensions of health, going beyond theory to appreciate the human side of public health interventions.

The WAAF-IHCC experience offered students an important window into the challenges and innovations



within Ghana's health landscape. Through this collaboration, WAAF continues to affirm its role not only as a service provider, but also as a learning hub for global public health education and advocacy.

# First Lady Lordina Mahama and Ghana AIDS Commission Host Free Medical Health Screening in Accra

On July 4th, In a commendable effort to promote public health and wellness, the first lady of Ghana, her excellency Lordina Mahama in collaboration with the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC) organized a free health screening exercise for residents of Accra. The event held at the forecourt of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, aimed to increase HIV testing, offer medical counselling and also encourage early detection of various health conditions in the process of this



initiative Ghana health service, SOS and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the exhibition and health outreach. Amongst them is WAFF who also took part of the free health screening, the number of people who tested in total were 110, number of females tested was 106, men who tested were 4, where as positive cases was 1 and number of negative cases was 108 during the free health screening covered all critical health checks including HIV/AIDS testing and counselling, blood pressure and blood sugar, malaria testing and breast and cervical cancer.



The event aimed to encourage early detection and treatment of diseases while raising awareness about preventive healthcare measures. The first lady Lordina Mahama, a dedicated advocate for health and social welfare, emphasized the importance of regular health check-ups in her address. She reiterated her commitment to supporting vulnerable groups, particularly women and children through initiative that enhance healthcare accessibility. The Ghana AIDS Commission played a pivotal role in the exercise, providing HIV education and testing services and also

highlighted the progress made in combating HIV/AIDS in Ghana while stressing the need to continue public engagement to eliminate stigma and encourage testing.

Beneficiaries of the free health screening expressed their gratitude for the initiative, calling for more frequent health outreach programs in underserved communities. Many attendees commended the first lady and the GAC ( Ghana AIDS Commission ) for their effort in prioritizing the health of Ghanaians.



## WAAF HIV Prevention Lecture at The University of Ghana



On June 23, 2025, the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) was invited by the university of Ghana, Legon to deliver a lecture on the prevention of HIV infection. The session was held at the kofi Abrefa Busia Hall within the Department of social work and was facilitated by Dr. Paul Sowah, a representative of WAAF team. Dr. Sowah engaged the students in an informative and interactive session that covered various aspects of HIV, including how HIV infection occurs, methods of prevention and the available treatment options. Emphasis was placed on prevention strategies such as testing and counseling and the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT). The session was both educational and practical. Students were taught how to properly examine condoms for defects such as holes, tears or leaks before use. Condoms were distributed to students as part of the practical awareness initiative.

The class was very lively and interactive, with students asking insightful questions to deepen their understanding of HIV prevention and management.

Before the session was brought to a close, WAAF extends its gratitude to the University of Ghana for the opportunity to educate and engage with the next generation on such an important public health issue.



# HIV Awareness Meeting: Educating for Prevention and Healthy Living

The West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF), in collaboration with the International Health Care Centre (IHCC), continues to remain committed to improving health outcomes for people living with HIV (PLHIV). Together, both institutions create safe and supportive spaces for education, open dialogue, treatment, and empowerment.



As part of ongoing facility-based group meetings held in the second quarter of 2025, WAAF and IHCC organized an HIV Education and Awareness Meeting that brought together PLHIV to deepen their understanding of HIV, prevention strategies, treatment options, and healthy living.

Participants were reminded that HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, making the body more vulnerable to other infections when treatment is not adhered to. The session covered the different types of HIV—HIV-1, HIV-2, and dual infection (HIV-1 & HIV-2)—and emphasized the importance of early testing and consistent continuous care in effectively managing the condition.

The facilitators also highlighted the strong link between HIV and tuberculosis (TB), explaining that PLHIV may receive TB treatment or TB preventive therapy depending on their clinical needs. Common HIV-related symptoms such as weight loss, prolonged fever, rashes, persistent diarrhea, headaches, and vomiting were discussed to encourage early health-seeking behavior.

Modes of HIV transmission were clearly explained, noting that the virus is spread through infected body fluids including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk, as well as from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. Addressing myths and misconceptions, WAAF and IHCC stressed the importance of accurate information in reducing new HIV infections and stigma.

**PrEP**

Prevention strategies formed a key part of the discussion. Participants learned about abstinence, correct and consistent condom use, avoiding the sharing of sharp objects, and reducing multiple sexual partnerships. The session also emphasized the role of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV-negative individuals at risk and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), which must be accessed within 72 hours after potential exposure.

Beyond prevention, real-life experiences of living with HIV were shared. Participants were encouraged to adhere strictly to their antiretroviral therapy (ART), avoid alcohol and unapproved herbal remedies, and consult healthcare providers when experiencing side effects such as nausea, fatigue, mood changes, or increased appetite. These discussions reinforced the importance of treatment adherence in achieving viral suppression and maintaining long-term health.

The meeting concluded with a powerful reminder that HIV is not a death sentence but a manageable condition when individuals have the right information, timely access to treatment, and consistent support. Through education, testing, and community engagement, WAAF and IHCC remain dedicated to supporting individuals and families affected by HIV—ensuring that no one has to walk this journey alone.

# Coming Together to Learn and Be Empowered: Sexual Reproductive Health and Right Counseling

When people come together to learn, they become empowered. At the West African AIDS Foundation (WAAF), in collaboration with the International Health Care Centre (IHCC), a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) teaching session was held to create a safe space for learning, sharing, and open conversation.

The session was held for People living with HIV to equip them with the knowledge that sexual and reproductive health is not just about avoiding illness, but about overall well-being — physical, emotional, mental, and social. Participants present were encouraged to see SRHR as an important part of living a healthy and confident life.

Discussions also covered sexual and reproductive rights, including the right to make informed choices, access quality healthcare, and live free from stigma, discrimination, or abuse. Respect, dignity, and equality for everyone were strongly emphasized.



Safe sex practices were discussed in simple terms, highlighting the correct use of condoms, regular STI testing, and ways to protect oneself and their partner(s). The session also touched on healthy relationships while stressing on the importance of trust, communication, respect, and setting boundaries, as well as recognizing and seeking help in unhealthy, toxic and abusive situations.

Participants learned about their right to confidentiality, access to treatment, and safe reproductive choices. The importance of taking their medication regularly to stay healthy and have healthy children was discussed. Guidance was also given on how to carefully and age-appropriately talk and disclose to children born with HIV, helping them understand their health and grow with confidence.

Participants actively asked questions, which were gracefully answered.. They were then encouraged to continue using available sexual and reproductive health services for ongoing care and support.

WAAF and IHCC, through initiatives like these, continue to bring people together, break barriers to treatment, and empower communities with knowledge that leads to healthier lives.

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, TB and all associated conditions. 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 2025 and you can follow our work on these same platforms.

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- **Bonusu** - Beside Kpogas Furnitures- Tech Traffic Light