

**WEST AFRICA AIDS FOUNDATION
&
INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARE CENTRE**

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Promoting Early Detection During Breast Cancer Awareness Month 2025

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October 2025, the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF), through its onsite clinic, the International Health Care Center (IHCC), organized a free breast examination exercise at its Haatso branch.

The initiative formed part of WAAF's ongoing commitment to promoting preventive health and raising awareness about the importance of early detection of Breast Cancer. During the exercise, a total of 29 individuals received free breast examinations carried out by trained healthcare professionals.

Participants were also educated on the importance of regular breast self-examination, routine screening, and seeking medical attention when any unusual changes are noticed. By providing accessible screening services and health education, WAAF continues to support efforts to reduce the

the impact of breast cancer through early detection and timely care. Through initiatives like this, WAAF and IHCC reaffirm their dedication to improving community Health and empowering individuals with the knowledge and services needed to protect their wellbeing



WAAF at ICASA 2025: Amplifying West African Voices on a Global Stage

The West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) recorded a strong and impactful presence at the 23rd International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA 2025), held in Accra, Ghana. The conference, under the theme “Africa in Action: Catalysing Integrated Sustainable Responses to End AIDS, TB & Malaria,” brought together governments, researchers, civil society, and communities to advance African-led, sustainable health solutions. A key highlight of WAAF’s participation was the acceptance of three scientific abstracts presented by:

- Benjamin Boateng** — Bridging the Gap: Comprehensive HIV Service Delivery in Hard-to-Reach Communities
- Penelope M. Agbai** — From Vulnerability to Vitality: Transforming Maternal Health in Ghana
- Gideon Pious Awuzu** — Effect of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill on Access to Health Services by vulnerable Populations – Greater Kumasi, Ghana

BRIDGING THE GAP: COMPREHENSIVE HIV SERVICE DELIVERY IN HARD-TO-REACH COMMUNITIES

Authors: BENJAMIN K. BOATENG, WENDY AMMA, ATSI PRINCE K. WAGBOPUR, NAA ABILEY, RICHARD ADJONGI

Theme: Track E
Abstract Subcategory: E4 Community systems strengthening for health care delivery

OBJECTIVES
Hard-to-reach communities in Ghana face significant barriers to HIV service access due to poor road networks, high transportation costs, and geographical isolation, particularly in areas along water bodies. Outreach volunteers relied on canoes and motorbikes to reach remote areas, delivering essential HIV services to both the general population and key populations. The West Africa AIDS Foundation, under the USAID Strengthening the Care Continuum Project led by JI implemented targeted HIV prevention, testing, and treatment interventions in Elenbelle, Jomors, and Nzema East districts.

DESCRIPTION
The project implemented a community-driven approach by identifying and training peer mobilizers—members of local groups such as the handweavers' association, long-truck drivers' union, boat riders' association, "baba" drivers' union, and faith-based organizations. These mobilizers led targeted engagement sessions and disseminated information through community information centres. To reach remote areas, outreach volunteers and community health nurses used motorbikes and canoes to deliver confidential, high-quality HIV education, testing, and counselling. HIV-positive individuals were linked to antiretroviral therapy (ART), while eligible HIV-negative individuals were enrolled on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

RESULTS
A total of 2,067 community members were reached, with 1,559 receiving HIV testing services (75% testing rate). 48 HIV positive cases were identified, and 85 were successfully initiated on treatment (95% treatment initiation rate). In addition, 239 high-risk individuals were screened and enrolled on PrEP. Engagement with peer mobilizers from local groups significantly increased community participation and acceptance of HIV services, resulting in higher PrEP enrollment and improved ART linkage.

KEY FINDINGS

- Utilizing community information centres for announcements and engaging diverse local groups significantly increased participation and reach.
- Peer mobilizers, as trusted opinion leaders, were key in fostering service acceptance.
- Reliable transportation, particularly motorbikes, improved access, while trained community health nurses as case managers ensured confidentiality and professionalism, reinforcing trust and enabling informed health decisions through comprehensive HIV education.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Utilizing community information centres for announcements and engaging diverse local groups significantly increased participation and reach.
- Peer mobilizers, as trusted opinion leaders, were key in fostering service acceptance.
- Reliable transportation, particularly motorbikes, improved access, while trained community health nurses as case managers ensured confidentiality and professionalism, reinforcing trust and enabling informed health decisions through comprehensive HIV education.

NEXT STEPS
To ensure no one is left behind in the HIV response, there should be scaling up outreach activities in other isolated areas by leveraging local social networks and existing resources like community information centres to enhance outreach and engagement.

Logos: USAID, JST, WAAF, ICASA



These presentations reflected WAAF’s practical experience in HIV prevention, maternal and sexual health, community engagement, and rights-based programming for vulnerable and key populations.

In addition, several WAAF staff received full and partial scholarships to participate in the conference, enabling broader institutional representation across technical sessions, capacity-building workshops, and strategic networking engagements.

Participation in ICASA 2025 strengthened WAAF’s partnerships, enhanced staff capacity, and reaffirmed the organization’s role as a leading civil society voice in the regional HIV response. Lessons from the conference are already informing WAAF’s 2026 priorities, particularly the expansion of integrated community-based HIV services, strengthened maternal health interventions, and continued advocacy for equitable access to care.



Commonwealth “Disinfo Detour” Project: Advancing Ethical Use of HIV Data

In line with its commitment to protecting vulnerable populations and strengthening evidence-based public health communication, the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) started implementing the Commonwealth-funded “Disinfo Detour” Project in 2025. The project seeks to address the growing challenge of disinformation and misuse of HIV-related data in Ghana, particularly narratives that fuel stigma, discrimination, and hostility toward sexual and gender minorities as well as People Living with HIV (PLHIV).

While Ghana has made notable progress in the national HIV response, recent years have seen increasing manipulation and misrepresentation of HIV data within public discourse. This trend became particularly pronounced during national conversations surrounding the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, where misleading narratives—often shaped by cultural and religious biases—portrayed vulnerable groups as drivers of disease and immorality. Such misinformation has contributed to heightened stigma, social exclusion, and barriers to accessing essential health services.



The Disinfo Detour Project is designed to counter these harmful trends by promoting the ethical, accurate, and responsible use of HIV-related data and strengthening rights-based public health messaging. As part of the project’s inception activities, an online baseline survey was rolled out in Q4 of 2025 to assess prevailing misinformation trends, stakeholder knowledge gaps, and opportunities for targeted intervention.



WAAF is implementing the project in close collaboration with key national institutions responsible for managing sensitive HIV data, including the Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC), the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP), and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). Through these partnerships, the project aims to support the development of practical frameworks that enhance data protection, encourage responsible data sharing, and reduce the risk of misinterpretation or weaponization of HIV information.

A central component of the project focuses on capacity strengthening for national agencies, civil society organizations, and community-based groups to identify, manage, and respond to misinformation in real time. By building sustainable response mechanisms, the project seeks to improve trust between communities and health institutions while safeguarding vulnerable populations from harm caused by inaccurate or sensationalized information.

Overall, the Commonwealth Disinfo Detour Project aligns with WAAF-IHCC’s broader mission to promote health equity, protect human rights, and ensure inclusive access to HIV prevention, treatment, and care. By fostering a more informed and responsible communication environment, the project contributes to Ghana’s efforts to sustain progress toward HIV epidemic control while advancing dignity, inclusion, and respect for all.

2025 WAD at WAAF

As part of activities marking World AIDS Day, the Ghana HIV and AIDS Network (GHANETT) organized a public awareness walk from parts of Adenta to the Peduase Lodge area in Aburi.

The West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) was pleased to be in attendance, joining partners, stakeholders, and community members in solidarity to promote HIV awareness, prevention, testing, treatment adherence, and stigma reduction. The walk provided an important opportunity to engage the public, share accurate information, and reinforce collective responsibility in the fight against HIV and AIDS.



WAAF's participation reflects our ongoing commitment to advancing public health education, encouraging healthy behaviors, and supporting initiatives that uphold dignity, inclusion, and access to quality healthcare. Collaborative efforts such as this demonstrate the power of community action in driving progress toward ending HIV and AIDS.

The West Africa AIDS Foundation remains dedicated to working with national and regional partners to ensure that no one is left behind in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Elton John AIDS Foundation Visits WAAF-IHCC to Review Digital HIV Prevention Project

The Elton John AIDS Foundation, in partnership with the Hope Alliance Foundation, paid a learning and review visit to the West Africa AIDS Foundation (WAAF) clinic, the International Health Care Centre (IHCC) in Haatso, to assess the implementation of a pilot digital health project aimed at improving HIV prevention and care outcomes among vulnerable populations, particularly LBQ women.

The project, implemented through a digital application, was designed to encourage HIV self-testing (HIVST) uptake, PrEP initiation, access to counselling, and mental health support in a confidential and user-friendly manner. Through the app, users are able to request HIV self-test kits, which are discreetly delivered to them at no cost, with delivery expenses fully covered by the Elton John AIDS Foundation. This approach significantly reduced access barriers, including stigma, fear of discrimination, and logistical challenges faced by key and vulnerable populations.



Although the project period had formally ended, the visit by the Elton John AIDS Foundation aimed to gain deeper insights into how the intervention was implemented in practice. Discussions during the visit focused on key successes, lessons learned, and challenges encountered, including user engagement, digital literacy, follow-up support, and sustainability beyond the project lifecycle.

WAAF-IHCC shared evidence of the project's positive impact, particularly its role in expanding access to HIV prevention services, strengthening trust with LBQ women, and integrating mental health considerations into HIV programming. The visit also provided an opportunity for open dialogue on how similar digital interventions can be strengthened, scaled, and adapted to better serve marginalized communities.

WAAF-IHCC expressed appreciation to the Elton John AIDS Foundation and Hope Alliance Foundation for their continued commitment to innovative, rights-based, and community-centered approaches to HIV prevention and care. Such partnerships remain critical in ensuring equitable access to health services and advancing efforts to leave no one behind.



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.

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
GPS Address: GE-278-6349
Email: 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: 0249354576/ 0243362447
Email: info@waafweb.org

WAAF NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE

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

WAAF Ashanti, Bono and Bono East Offices

- **KMA/Atwima Kwamwoma** - Plot No. E7, Daban Pennii, Kumasi Daban
- **Techiman** – TF5564, Diasempa
- **Sunyani** – New Dormaa Extension Pastoral Road Plot No. 188 Ethiopia Junction
- **Obuasi Municipality** Community Nyameso 044 Manganese PTH House NO. Ac-116-7735
- **Bonsu** - Beside Kpogas Furnitures- Tech Traffic Light



@WAAFghana



@WAAF-IHCC



@West Africa AIDS
Foundation (WAAF)



@waafihcc