

ALLIANCE FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH RIGHTS

2009

ANNUAL REPORT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Virus
ARHR	Alliance For Reproductive Health Rights
ART	Anti-Retroviral Therapy
CAH-MDGs	Citizen's Action and Health MDGs
CBO	Community-based Organizations
CCF	Child Care Foundation
CEDEP	Centre for the Development of People
CENCOSAD	Centre for Community Studies, Action and Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DHMT	District Health Management Team
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
GHS	Ghana Health Service
HIV	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus
IP	Implementing Partner
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre
LNGOs	Local Non-Governmental Organizations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSIG	Marie Stopes International Ghana
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NHIA	National Health Insurance Authority
PPAG	Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana
PRMA	Project Resource Mobilization and Awareness
RH	Reproductive Health
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Soon we have come to the end of another eventful year. The year 2009 saw the organization making great strides in the implementation of programmes planned for the period. I will provide brief highlights of our activities for the year but will entreat all to read the full report to have a detailed idea of our achievements, lessons learned and challenges encountered.

To begin with, I would like to use this medium to express our sincere appreciation to all partners/stakeholders who contributed to make the year a memorable one. ARHR is grateful to the Board of Directors, the Advisory Board, Zonal and Implementing Partners and partner Civil Society Organizations that ARHR is collaborating with in its activities. ARHR is particularly grateful to INDEPTH Network and Creative Storm for supporting the organization to produce a documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana – a tool to be used for the organization’s advocacy and campaigns for improved maternal health. We are also indebted to our development partners Cordaid, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Oxfam Novib for their immense financial support to the work of the Alliance.

With great support from our zonal and local offices, the organization continued to implement its biggest project, the Alliance for Reproductive Health Programme (ARHP). For this year advocacy for improved maternal and child health was the main focus of programme implementation at both national and local levels. Additionally, nurses seconded to the projects by the Ghana Health Service in the districts handled technical aspects of community level education on maternal healthcare. They also supported in providing Family Planning services to beneficiary communities

The organization was also nominated to be part of an African Regional campaign – “Fair Play for Africa” – to be undertaken within the sub-region. Organized around the 2010 world cup to be staged in South Africa, Fair Play for Africa seeks to mobilize people across Africa to advocate for increased financial support for health

ARHR also produced a consolidated report of a survey undertaken to track Ghana’s performance on the health and education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in three underserved areas namely the Kwahu North, Bongo and the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem districts. The exercise formed part of activities undertaken under the Citizen’s Action and Health MDGs project which seeks to monitor and provide information on the MDGs particularly those that relate to health

During the year, ARHR completed the production of its documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana and had it launched at the British Council by the Vice President of Ghana, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama. Having developed a keen interest in undertaking a wide spectrum of advocacy activities for improved maternal health in Ghana, the organization is faced with the challenge of generating extra resources/funds to make this dream a reality.

I want to end by once again extending a hand of appreciation to all who have contributed in diverse ways to make the 2009 working year a success.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

About ARHR

The Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights is a Ghanaian-based network of national and local NGOs and community-based organisations engaged in sexual and reproductive health interventions in collaboration with national and district stakeholders and communities in 35 districts. Three zonal NGOs (ISODEC, CEDEP and CENCOSAD) act as coordinators and provide support to 35 local NGOs (LNGOs). The Alliance Secretariat provides programmes coordination and liaison at the national level.

Vision

ARHR works towards realizing a society in which the reproductive and health rights of all, especially vulnerable groups such as poor people, marginalized groups, women of reproductive age, are protected, respected and fulfilled irrespective of status, gender, race and beliefs.

Mission

The organization seeks to promote rights-based approaches to sexual and reproductive health in Ghana, particularly through advocacy and inclusive policy making in the interest of underserved communities, the poor and the marginalized.

2.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Key achievements made in programme implementation for the year 2009 include the following,

- The completion and launch of a documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana which captures community level as well as systemic factors contributing to high maternal deaths across the country. The documentary is intended to be used for series of advocacy activities at both national and local levels with the view to generate a critical mass of people who will be motivated by the content of the documentary to contribute to addressing this menace in our society.
- In line with working with Ghana Health Service to ensure service availability and utilization in rural and underserved communities, ARHR continued to facilitate the secondment of community health nurses to all 35 target districts in which the organization operates. The attached nurses supported their respective implementation partners on technical issues related to SRHR at the community level.
- ARHR collaborated with SEND Ghana to produce a CSOs monitoring report on Ghana's performance on the health and education-related MDGs (goals 2, 4, 5

and 6) in three underserved districts in Ghana – The Kwahu North, Bongo and the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem districts. The report was produced to serve as an alternative to that produced by government on the MDGs and to provide additional information on progress made in underserved areas. Deducing from information gathered from the field, the report concluded that it was unlikely for the country to achieve the targets set for goals 2, 4, 5 and 6 by the 2015 deadline.

- ARHR together with Ipas and Marie Stopes International begun with activities towards a undertaking a joint campaign for improved access to Family Planning and Comprehensive Abortion Care services. Unsafe abortion contributes 11 percent to maternal deaths and is the second largest medical cause of maternal mortality after hemorrhage. ARHR joined other members of the consortium to review proposals submitted by advertising agencies for undertaking national level media campaign activities on unsafe abortion as part of the bigger campaign programme. Origin 8 Sachi and Sachi was selected for the campaign activity

3.0 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights made significant progress in implementing planned activities/objectives for the 2009 working year under the different programmes and projects. The subsequent paragraphs highlight outcomes of activities under the following thematic areas which are core to the work of the Alliance.

3.1 Advocacy and Campaigns

3.1.1 Highlighting Gaps between Policy and Practice

Campaigning against maternal and neonatal deaths in Ghana

Available statistics on maternal mortality shows that more women continue to suffer from maternal illnesses and deaths. The UN MDGs report for 2008 estimates that maternal mortality decreased by less than 1% each year between 1990 and 2005. To reach the MDG target for maternal health, this reduction should be at least 5.5% annually. Ghana's maternal mortality rate also stands at a high rate of 451 per 100,000 livebirths (GMHS 2007). This represents an increase from 214 per 100,000 livebirths reported in the 1993 national maternal health survey.

Realising the enormity of the situation, government has initiated a number of interventions to address maternal and child healthcare in the country. In 2008 for instance government, did set up a national task team to assess Ghana's maternal mortality situation and facilitate the development of appropriate interventions. Other interventions include the governments' initiative on free deliveries for pregnant women and the introduction of the High Impact Rapid Delivery (HIRD) strategy to deliver a package of most effective interventions for improved maternal and child health.

To contribute to resolving this national crisis, ARHR produced and launched "The Lights Have Gone Out Again" its documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana in July 2009 under the patronage of the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana. The launching of the documentary was done by the vice president and he also pledged his support for the organization's advocacy endeavours as well as his commitment to reducing maternal deaths in the country. The documentary will be used for series of campaigns for improved maternal and child health in the country in subsequent years.



Dignitaries at the launch including the Vice president of the Republic of Ghana ready to light candles to symbolize their commitment to addressing maternal deaths in the country – “Keeping the lights ‘on’ and not ‘out’ as depicted by the documentary”

Advocacy for improved reproductive health supplies and integrated financing mechanisms

Shortages of reproductive health supplies around the world are undermining progress towards achieving the Program of Action established at the ICPD in Cairo in 1994. The Program of Action establishes the right of men and women to be informed about their reproductive choices and health and to have access to the information and services that make good health possible. . In 2001, seven years after ICPD, leaders of the 179 nations which met for the ICPD had realized that there remained a wide gap between contraceptives supplies and the funding available for purchasing these supplies. A meeting was therefore organized in Istanbul Turkey to call for action for world leaders to collectively create awareness, increase support and seek solutions to the crises in contraceptive commodity supplies.

In line with the global initiative and to contribute to increased financial support for reproductive health supplies in Ghana, ARHR initiated the Advocating for Improved RH Supplies Integration in Financing Mechanisms in Ghana project under the Project Resource Mobilization and Awareness being implemented by the PPAG. During the year, ARHR collaborated with PPAG and Ipas to undertake a number of radio discussions to raise the profile of reproductive health supplies situation in the country. Key issues discussed included the dwindling financial support for RH supplies, the over dependence on donor support for RH supplies and the implications of lack of RH supplies and utilization on the reproductive health outcomes of the country. The discussions took place during the peak hours (morning) of radio time on Joy fm, Radio Gold and Unique FM.

Addressing unsafe abortions

Recognizing that unsafe abortions remains one major medical cause of maternal mortality both globally (contributes 13% to all maternal deaths - WHO 2003) and nationally (11% GMHS 2007), ARHR together with Ipas and Marie Stopes International have formed a three member consortium to initiate a joint campaign for improved access to Family Planning and Comprehensive Abortion Care services. During the reporting period, ARHR joined the other members of the consortium to review proposals submitted by selected advertising agencies for national level media campaign activities on unsafe abortion. Origin 8 Sachi and Sachi was selected for the activity.

Regional Campaign on the health MDGs

ARHR also initiated activities towards the implementation of Fair Play for Africa Campaign in Ghana. Fair play for Africa is an African Regional Campaign that seeks to take advantage of the FIFA World cup 2010 to be staged in South Africa to advocate for renewed commitment of African Governments to their promises under the health MDGs. During the period under review, ARHR organized a national consultation with other CSOs to elicit their support for a national level campaign in Ghana. A steering committee was constituted to coordinate the campaign in-country. Additionally, in November 2009, ARHR together with other representatives from nine other African countries participating in the campaign met with the international steering committee in South Africa to share updates on their campaign and strategize on how best to plan and execute the campaign successfully.

In recognition of the fact access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) still remains a challenge to addressing the treatment needs of persons living with HIV, ISODEC facilitated the organization of a Round Table Meeting on ARTs to campaign for improved access to ARTs in Ghana. The meeting sought to among others review the current trends in the spread of HIV; advocate for ART drugs to be considered as a national social service; call for all stakeholders to be committed to their pledges and support for addressing HIV and promote the incorporation of family planning into the whole administration of antiretroviral therapy.

3.2 Strengthening local capacity for SRH activities

One major objective of the Alliance is to build the capacity of partner organizations and other NGOs to deliver rights-based sexual and reproductive health services and information. Highlights of capacity building activities undertaken during the reporting period are as follows.

ISODEC organized capacity workshops on Family Planning Counseling and Life Saving skills for nurses seconded to its project. In the same vein, CEDEP also organized a Family Planning counseling workshop for its project officers and peer educators with support from nurses seconded to the projects.

To enhance the activities of peer educators involved in the project, CENCOSAD organized a training programme for its PEs on Family Planning methods, dangers of unsafe abortions, teenage pregnancy and Reproductive Health Rights.

ARHR also developed a draft Strategic Plan to guide the activities of the organization for the period 2010 – 2014. The process for the development of the plan was very participatory as all zonal offices and implementing partners were contacted for their inputs.

3.3 Networking and collaborations

The Alliance has over the years built stronger partnerships and collaborations with both local and international NGOs as well governmental bodies to jointly promote sexual and reproductive health rights at the national, regional and district levels. ARHR during the period under review collaborated with Marie Stopes International Ghana (MSIG) and Ipas to form a consortium to initiate a joint campaign for improved access to Family Planning and Comprehensive Abortion Care services. Additionally ARHR is partnering with PPAG and other organizations to implement the Project Resource Mobilization and Awareness. ARHR was also nominated to join other NGOs from nine African countries to begin activities of Fair Play for Africa – an African Regional Campaign that seeks to take advantage of the FIFA world cup 2010 to be staged in South Africa to advocate for renewed commitment of African Governments to their promises under the health MDGs

Collaboration with Ghana Health Service

The alliance collaborates closely with the Ghana Health Service in implementing its activities at the national zonal and district levels.

National level

The Ghana Health Service actively supported the organization to produce its documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana by providing the organization with the needed backing to undertake the activity. GHS staff at the different health facilities and communities in which the documentary was filmed were also very cooperative.

Zonal Level

ISODEC and partners have a strong relationship with the DHMT and GHS. The Regional Directorate of Health Service, NHIA and the DHMT participated in ISODEC's partners review meeting and made inputs into strengthening the activities of the organization.

CEDEP also participated in GHS review meetings organized in the Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Eastern Regions. CEDEP was given the opportunity to showcase the activities of the Alliance in a presentation.

3.4 Increasing access to responsive SRH services and information in communities to empower them demand for responsive SRH services

Community Education

A core objective of the work of the Alliance is to increase access to quality sexual and reproductive health services by increasing communities understanding and acceptance of SRH services. Highlights of some community education and outreach programs organized to contribute to the set objective are as follows,

An IP of ISODEC organized Family Planning education sessions for participants from 11 communities in its working district. The organization recorded some gains in this activity. During the first half of 2009, CFRHP had 20 women from its working communities visiting the attached nurses to secure contraceptive methods of their choice. Ten other women went with their husbands for the same purpose.

CEDEP educated a total of 4,643 community members, chiefs and opinion leaders in the middle zone on the Patients Rights Charter and the Code of Ethics for health workers. As a strategy to expand coverage in disseminating the content of the Patients Rights Charter, an IP (CCCCF) has written out the Charter on the walls at Jejeti Lorry Station and Mpraeso Amamfrom, two of its operational communities.

In addition eight community health nurses seconded to CEDEP's projects provided community members with regular education on the importance of exclusively breastfeeding infants for the first six months, maternal nutrition and safe motherhood practices necessary for the prevention of maternal and child deaths

As a strategy to increase community's participation in local level education sessions on SRHR, two IPs of CENCOSAD, Ashiedu Keteke CBOs and CEPEHRG adopted the use of drama and interactive performances to sensitize community members on the importance of accessing Family Planning services. The strategy has been noted to be very effective for community education sessions as people are greatly attracted by the drama

Women's Groups

Nurses seconded to CEDEP's projects educated the various women's groups which are part of the project on exclusive breastfeeding, infant and child health and concerns about menopause. ISODEC and CENCOSAD and partners also educated their women's groups the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and Family Planning.

Community health nurses

Nurses seconded to the projects continued to provide technical support to the implementing partners on SRH issues. In project communities across the three zones the

nurses provided community members with routine education on nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding dangers of unsafe abortions, Family Planning services and skilled delivery at birth to enhance improved maternal health.

3.5 Tracking Ghana's progress towards realizing MDGs 2, 4, 5 and 6

The Millennium Development Goals was adopted by world leaders in 2000 and has a deadline of 2015 for the achievement of the eight goals. The goals provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. The MDGs also provide a framework for the entire international community to work together towards a common end – making sure that human development reaches everyone everywhere. ARHR's Citizen's Action and Health MDGs project seeks to monitor, track and provide education on the MDGs with a view to contribute to achieving the health-related MDGs. The project is being implemented in six underserved districts of the country namely the Bongo district, Kwahu North district, Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem district, Kintampo North district and the Builsa district. Key activities that were undertaken during the 2009 working year are as follows

Generating evidence for advocacy

To generate extensive evidence for its advocacy on the health and education-related MDGs and to contribute to providing information on the MDGs in Ghana, ARHR and SEND-Ghana produced and launched a consolidated report on a monitoring exercise that was undertaken in three underserved districts of Ghana – The Kwahu North, Bongo and the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem districts. The report was produced as an alternative to that produced by government to provide additional information on progress made especially for underserved areas. From the findings of the monitoring exercise, the report concluded that it was unlikely that Ghana will be able to achieve the targets set for the MDGs by the 2015 deadline.



Participants at the Launch of MDGs monitoring report

MDGs Week Celebration

To mark the 2009 MDGs week celebration, ARHR which serves as the lead agency for the health platform under the CSOs campaign secretariat led its platform to organize a route march in Mankesim in the Central Region to solicit the support of both men and women to Stand Up and Take action against maternal deaths in Ghana. Over 200 participants with a large proportion of market women took part in the march which had wide media coverage

IE&C materials for community level education and information sharing

To further enrich information available for community level education on the health MDGs, ARHR produced fact sheets on governments' commitments to addressing maternal and child health, Malaria, HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis. Additionally, posters on the Patients Rights Charter were produced for community level education programmes



An Implementing Partner working in the Builsa district with posters and fact sheets in hand for community education on the MDGs

Global call to action against HIV/AIDS pandemic

In line with the global call to action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the Health Platform in collaboration with the Christian Council of Ghana organized a community durbar at Amasaman to create awareness about the pandemic and also to press on government to provide universal access to anti-retroviral therapy

Capacity Building for policy advocacy and budget analysis

ARHR organized a three-day capacity-building workshop on budget processes, analysis and research for focal partners of ARHR and other partner civil society organisations. The workshop was a follow up to an earlier one on Public Health Policy Analysis and Advocacy which took place in October 2008. The purpose of the workshop was to provide participants with knowledge on the health sector budget processes and analysis for effective advocacy at both local and national levels.

4.0 CHALLENGES

Key constraints encountered within the year under review include the following:

Weak documentation on project outcomes

Weak documentation and reporting amongst IPs affected the quality of reported that the zonal NGOs submitted to the secretariat. This led to more time spent in clarifying issues with the implementing partners before finally submitting reports to the funding agency

Delay in receipt of funds

Delay in the release of funds remains a major challenge to the smooth implementation of project activities at all levels but most especially at the level of the implementing partners. Implementing partners are not able to submit their reports to the zonal offices on time because they do not receive funds on time and are unable to implement activities as scheduled. This leads to delays in compilation of reports at the zonal level and ultimately at the secretariat level.

Inadequate incentives for Peer Educator activities

Peer educators are sometimes reluctant to work effectively in the communities because they are not receiving adequate incentives for their work. ARHR secretariat will continue to work with zonal NGOs to maximize the contributions and consequently, impact of peer educators under the ARHP in the coming year.

5.0 LESSONS LEARNED

Essential Role of Community leaders

A key lesson learnt from programme implementation is that the involvement of traditional/opinion leaders in community level advocacy activities improves community support for programme implementation to complement the efforts of the stakeholders at the local, district and national levels in identifying and addressing critical reproductive health issues.

Better advocacy with reliable and concrete evidence

The documentary on maternal deaths in Ghana produced by the ARHR has won high acceptance by several Civil Society Organizations working on women's reproductive health rights and will be used for a bigger campaign against maternal deaths

Effectively collaborating with GHS and MoH

Participation of ARHR in MoH regional performance review meetings continues to serve as a useful avenue for ARHR in providing feedback on beneficiary perspectives regarding the health care system to the Ministry and GHS.