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Boston Globe
4/14/99

First aid for AIDS

NKAWKAW, Ghana

In the teeming market here, people sell casava root, used shoes, cola nuts, dried fish, and safe sex. The UN Population Fund and the Seventh-day

Editorial Notebook

Adventist Church have organized the market's long-distance truckers, female porters, and pushcart vendors into a kind of AIDS brigade, wearing T-shirts that urge "say no to casual sex" and carrying bright blue satchels that contain condoms and informational pamphlets.

Health workers noticed that AIDS was spreading in Ghana along the major truck routes, so it was clear that the drivers needed to be recruited to fight the disease. At the truck dispatcher's office near the Jesus Alone Beauty Salon and the Keep Smiling Bar, 70-year-old Emmanuel Danquah explains what he tells fellow truckers in various ports of call. "I advise them not to mix sex with anybody at all until they are properly married. I tell them AIDS is a killer disease." He says his advanced age helps his message command respect, but he

can only hope for acceptance.

AIDS has not attacked Ghana with the ferocity seen elsewhere in Africa, but with 45 percent of the country's people under age 15 and about to enter their most sexually active years, spreading the word is especially urgent. The official HIV infection rate is 2 percent, a third the regional average, but the real figure is probably higher. Patients at clinics are not routinely tested for HIV unless they are showing symptoms of the disease.

By that time there is little chance for effective intervention. The expensive drug therapies that have prolonged life for so many AIDS patients in the United States are not even discussed. Condoms, bleach, and fidelity are the only weapons.

Education takes whatever form it can. The UN holds workshops for barbers, teaching them not to reuse razor blades. Traditional "wanzum" — the local surgeons who circumcise boys — are told to sterilize their knives. Churches give out condoms. It's as simple as that, and as profound.

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Country Brief

GHANA

06/01/00

Socio-Economic Data

Total population (thousands), 1997	18,997,582	UNFPA
% of population urbanized, 1996	36	UNPOP
Annual population growth rate, 1994	2.90	UNPOP
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), 1996	70	UNICEF/UNPOP
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 births), 1990	740	WHO/UNICEF
Life expectancy, 1994	M56 F60	UNPOP
Adult literacy rate, 1995	M 76, F 54	UNESCO
Per capita GNP (US\$), 1995	390	World Bank
Human Poverty Index Value (HPI)	32.6	UNDP

Status of the Epidemic

Prevalence – Year	Trend
4.6 - 1999	Evidence of slow growth in prevalence.

National Response

National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)

- Ministry of Health co-ordinates the national response to the epidemic in the country. Up-to now.

District Response Initiative (Health Reform and HIV)

- Nine districts will be starting the development of strategic plans, involving the District Assemblies, the sectors represented at district level and the members of the community including people living with HIV/AIDS and NGOs. District Assemblies are to finance the interventions supported by UN cosponsors and bilateral donors.

Political Commitment

- The Government, in a recent official communiqué following the International Partnership against AIDS in Africa mission, has decided to reinforce the NACP, to mobilise domestic resources for key sectors, and to improve absorption capacities.

Multisectoral Involvement

- The national response involves several ministries: Employment & Social Welfare, the District Assemblies, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Agriculture.
- **NGO response:** NGOs are mainly involved in work in the area of Information, Education and Communication (IEC). There are also some Christian NGOs involved in community

Country Brief

mobilisation for HIV/AIDS including care and support of PLWHA.

• UN Theme Group on HIV-AIDS

Chair: UNFPA Representative

Members: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank, FAO, WFP, UNHCR, UNU, UNIDO, UNIC, bilateral donors

UNAIDS Personnel: Country Programme Advisor: Ms Cynthia Eledu.

Junior Professional Officer: Ms Gerardina Van Mensvoort

Support from UN System Agencies for HIV/AIDS activities in 1996-1997

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Amount US\$</i>
WHO	96,000
UNDP	53,548
UNFPA	60,000
UNICEF	421,000
UNAIDS	350,000
Total	980,548

Support from bilateral organizations for HIV/AIDS activities in 1996-1997

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Amount US\$</i>
Royal Netherlands Embassy	60,700
Danish Embassy	56,700
GTZ Regional Project	3,500
DFID	168,484
EU	1,234,358
USAID	1,452,000
CANADA	33,000
GERMANY	110,000
Others:	606,068
Total	3,724,810