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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

AGRICULTURE GOVERNANCE, RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (AGREE) ACTIVITY

~ COVID-19 Response Initiative ~

Bi-Weekly Update

February 05 to February 19, 2021

GHANA COUNTRY UPDATE

As of February 19, 2021, Ghana has a total confirmed case of 78,689, with 70,348 recoveries/discharge and 568 deaths. Total number of active cases stand at 7,773. Hospitalization rates are still high, with 28 people being critically ill, 92 being severe as of the time of reporting (Ref: *Data on Ghana Health Service website*). All 16 regions continue to have active cases. Greater Accra, Central, Western, Ashanti, Eastern, Upper East, Upper West, and Volta regions are the hardest hit. The President's ban and partial restrictions on public gathering is still in force. Funerals, concerts, theatrical performances, parties, beaches, nightclubs, cinemas, and pubs remain shut.

A very worrying trend in Ghana's case analysis is the rising toll of mortality. Since the beginning of February to date, the records show a total number of 128 deaths. This is very alarming. The high rise in cases and related deaths is attributable to the presence of a new variant of the virus in the country. The West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP) at the University of Ghana has revealed that one of the virus' new strains which mutated in the United Kingdom is currently driving the new infections being recorded [in Ghana]. President Akufo-Addo had announced in January that a new variant of COVID-19 had been detected among travelers who had been isolated to prevent the spread.

<https://www.myjoyonline.com/more-contagious-uk-strain-dominating-ghanas-current-covid-19-transmission-waccbip/>

While the country's cases are on the rise, we remain positive about the arrival of vaccines in March 2021 as the president alluded to in his recent address to the nation.

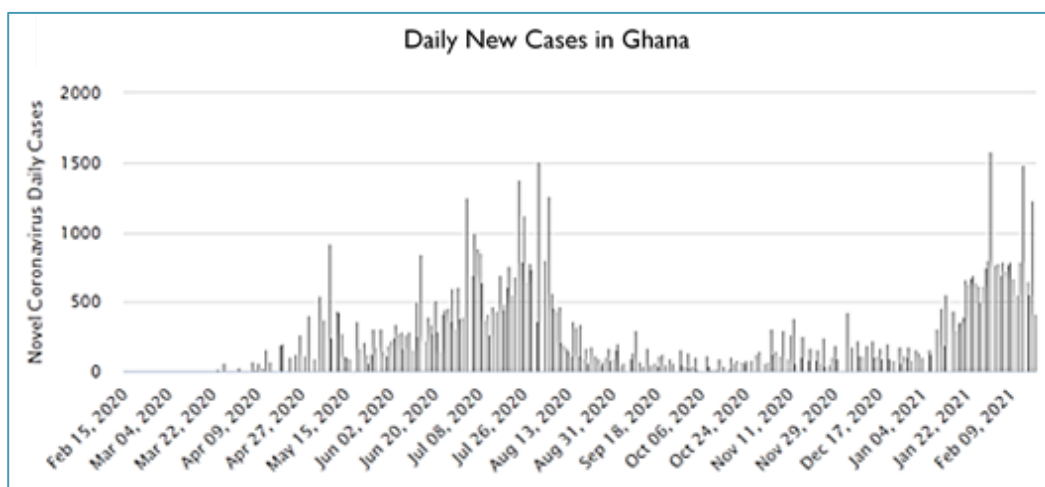
IMPORTANT UPDATE

The Information Ministry in collaboration with the Health Ministry and other state agencies on Friday, February 19, 2021, held a public engagement on COVID-19 vaccination roll out plan for the country. This comes after a surge in Covid-19 cases recorded and a public call for the vaccines to address the country's ordeal.

CASE COUNT AS OF FEBRUARY 19, 2021

Totals worldwide			
Total cases	Recovered	Deaths	
110,928,584	85,870,545	2,454,505	
Totals in Ghana			
Total cases	Recovered	Death	Active Cases
78,689	70,348	568	7,773

Source: Worldometers, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>
Retrieved on February 19, 2021



Graph of daily new cases in Ghana. Source: Worldometers, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/ghana/> Retrieved on February 19, 2021

NORTHERN GHANA UPDATE

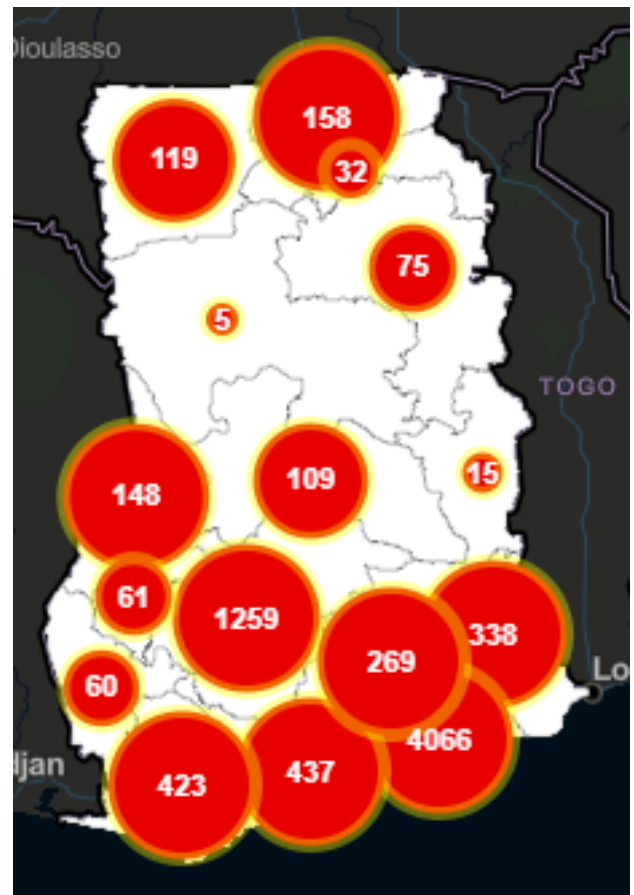
Ghana's total COVID-19 positive cases continue to rise high. Since our last update on February 04, 2021, data on the Ghana Health Service website (see image to the right) shows rise in cases in three of AGREE's operating regions – Savannah, Upper East and North East. Savannah Region has appreciated from one to five within the two-week period, while Upper West now has 119 cases compared to the 68 reported in previous updates. North East has an upward increase of 25 cases. On a positive note, active cases in the Northern Region and Upper East have declined, moving from 114 to 75 and 225 to 158, respectively. It is the project's desire that gains made in the Northern Region and Upper East would be enhanced while the three other regions continue with the adoption of the COVID-19 safety protocols to mitigate further spread.

Undesirably, AGREE's monitoring via the project's Early Warning System shows low levels of adherence to some of the recently-imposed ban, particularly, on mass funeral gathering. In Talensi District in the Upper East Region, a community monitor observed that the people are not observing the President's ban on mass performance of funerals strictly, as they continue to perform funeral rites of their deceased family members. The mass gatherings of people could contribute to a further spread in COVID-19 if the authorities do not enforce the ban strictly.

In a meeting held with health officials, we gathered that hotspots in the north include:

1. Northern: Tamale, Nanumba South, Saboba, Sagnarigu, Savelugu Nanton, Tatale Sangule, Tolon, Yendi
2. North East: Chereponi
3. Savannah: East Gonja, Central Gonja, Sawla-Tuna-Kalba
4. Upper East: Bolgatanga Municipal, Bawku Municipal, Bongo, Builsa North, Kassena Nankana (East and West)
5. Upper West: Nadowli, Wa Municipal

The AGREE Activity has been working with health officials and other stakeholders to scale up awareness creation, mitigate risk of exposure and address potential conflicts. As the evolution of the cases is very fleeting, the project is monitoring the cases to deliver targeted interventions to new hotspots.



Regional distribution of active cases. Source: Ghana Health Service (<https://www.ghanahealthservice.org/covid19/>). Retrieved on February 19, 2021

THE WHOLE OF COMMUNITY PLEDGE

To help combat the spread of coronavirus in Ghana, I pledge to:

- ✓ Wear nose mask
- ✓ Maintain social distancing
- ✓ Avoid crowds and large gatherings
- ✓ Stay home if possible
- ✓ Wash hands frequently with soap and water
- ✓ Disinfect the objects and surfaces frequently



For my Family, Community & Nation!

UPDATE ON AGREE'S COVID-19 ACTIVITIES

In line with the Whole of Community Approach, AGREE held engagement sessions with the Regional Directorate of Information Services Department (ISD) and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) on COVID-19 Response in northern Ghana. The engagements enabled the project to build synergy and strengthen collaboration between the initiative and these government institutions. The collaboration will enable the project to provide technical assistance and logistical support to the government institutions to scale up community-level sensitization on COVID-19 prevention and management, as well as peacebuilding and conflict mitigation. The institutions will broadcast messages in the local dialect, ensuring that it addresses specific needs and concerns of women, youth, men, children, traditional leaders, religious leaders, etc. The community-level sensitization is critical now as recent dialogue on COVID-19 with community stakeholders revealed that COVID-19 sensitizations and messaging have largely concentrated at the regional and district level with less community reach. It is expected that the collaboration with government institutions will promote ownership and sustainability.

Following the engagement, the initiative linked the CSOs, women groups (WAPs), and the government institutions to facilitate collaboration and information sharing. The CSOs and the women groups will receive educational materials and information from the government institutions for dissemination within their networks. The government institutions will also provide technical support to the civic groups to undertake community-level sensitizations on

COVID-19 and peacebuilding.

The project has instituted a community fund (small grant) to support community-level activities of the CSOs and the women groups. In the next coming week, modalities to access the fund will be shared with CSOs and other actors.

The project developed content for radio jingles and public service announcement. The radio jingles cover major themes on COVID-19 prevention messages including handwashing with soap under running water, facemask wearing, and coughing or sneezing into elbows/handkerchiefs. They also include messages to reduce the incidence of stigmatization and another to inspire people suffering with COVID-19 to seek early medical support. The public service announcements are intended to be community-led, to trigger peer influence, and increase adoption of the COVID-19 safety protocols. There is also a message against stigmatization, discrimination, conflict, and xenophobia. Production and airing of the messages on radio stations are expected to commence by February month-end.

The radio stations identified are situated in the suggested COVID-19 hotspot districts and broadcast reach is projected to cover all the project's operating districts. The jingles will be aired twice daily alongside public service announcements using information dissemination vans. All the information dissemination media are geared towards ensuring behaviour change among participants to promote the adoption of COVID-19 safety protocols.

ABOUT AGREE ACTIVITY

Agriculture Governance, Resilience and Economic Empowerment (AGREE) Activity is a USAID-supported activity with to ensure responsive governance for improved agricultural development in Ghana. The project has three distinct initiatives: 1) Governance Initiative; 2) COVID-19 Response Initiative; 3) WISH Initiative. Implementation of the COVID-19 response initiative is led by CARE International in Ghana, in collaboration with the West Africa Network for Peace (WANEP)-Ghana and the National Peace Council. Considering the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Initiative inspires a paradigm shift to combat the spread of the virus and prevent conflicts by adopting the WCA. The WCA enjoins every district/community stakeholder to come on board towards the fight against COVID-19, as well as sustaining peace in the society. For more information, please contact the project's Chief of Party, Pamela C. Bowen via: pamela.bowen@care.org

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