



GHANA COALITION OF NGOs

IN HEALTH

*Stand up campaign against maternal
deaths in Ghana*

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Introduction

The Millennium Development Secretariat is the organisation responsible for ensuring the realization of the Millennium Development Goals in Ghana.

The Health Platform comprises local NGOs such as ISODEC, CEDEP, CENCOSAD, CAS, Ghana Association for Women's Welfare, NAP +, Society for Women and AIDS in Africa, Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health and other coalitions and networks. The platform engages in a wide range of activities, spanning from service provision, research, advocacy to hold government accountable for commitments made on health issues, and monitor progress towards achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

The MDG secretariat charged the health platform with the responsibility of organising an event to mark International Day against Poverty between Friday the 16th and Sunday the 18th of October, 2009. The Planning Committee chose to organize a march in Mankesim on Saturday the 17th of October.

Objectives

The purpose of the march was to raise awareness on the unacceptable high rate of maternal mortality in the region; and the need for women to take ante and post-natal care serious in order to improve their health and reduce maternal mortality. Mankesim was selected because of its proximity to Cape Coast, which records the highest maternal mortality rate in the region (470 per 100,000-2006). Additionally, it was thought that the fact that Saturday is a market day would attract many women to hear the message.

Activities implemented

The March began from Manna Height Junction near the Glory filling station, through the streets to the market and finally to the Ebenezer Methodist Church, by the lorry park. There were approximately 300 participants, from as young as 6 years to as old as 60 years. There were over 250 females and only about 50 male who participated. With placards reading 'mothers should not die giving birth', empower women for better health, happy mothers, happy homes, and so on; participants marched to brass band music, while displaying the banners and distributing leaflets with messages written in vernacular language. At the end of the march, a representative from the Regional Health Directorate and Regional Director of nursing services, Mrs Margaret Morrisson gave a talk on maternal care. At the end of her talk, all present read out the pledge (see attached).



Participants in the Stand Up Against Poverty Campaign at Mankessim take to the streets in a March



Members of the Health Platform Planning Committee pose for a picture after the march

Outcome

The march generated a lot of interest as anticipated for several reasons. Firstly the age range of participants signaled that all were welcome; information vans had already been sent out to pique community members' interest and persuade them to participate. Secondly, there were 5 queenmothers in attendance which was instrumental in mobilizing more people.

Emerging issues

Several questions were asked on ways of enhancing maternal health, as well as questions on how men can help to reduce maternal mortality. It was evident that community education on maternal health was still needed beyond the day's activities; and people were eager to listen to information on health.

Challenges/Constraints

Inadequate t-shirts and logistics needed to attract the maximum number of people to participate. As a result, patronage though good, fell below expectations.

Recommendations

Preparation for subsequent programmes should begin in good time. For better mobilization, monies should be released on time, logistics provided in advance and more communities could benefit greatly from marches being organized.

Conclusion

The 'Stand up Campaign against Poverty' and specifically maternal mortality was a success in that, there was new resolve to end poverty. A sustained education and awareness creation will bring us nearer to the realization of this goal.