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Community-Based Interventions to Improve Hepatitis Testing in Africa: Ghana's Experience

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Background: Ghana belongs to the areas where the prevalence of chronic Hepatitis infection is high. We are engaged in several community intervention programs across the country. One of these interventions is Hepatitis B and C Screening, awareness and education, which was held in Tarkwa (Mining Community) in the Western Region of Ghana. More people are living with Hepatitis in the Tarkwa as a result of influx of galamsey activities. A lot of people engaged in unprotected sex as galamsey activities boom in the area, making it one of the districts in the Western region with high Hepatitis prevalence rate. Because of commercial activities, likely galamsey, people move all the way from different communities, some even don't have accommodation yet you find sexual activities going on. Hepatitis is on the rise so we can pin it on galamsey.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: Hepatitis testing was performed by trained staff from the Hepatitis Foundation of Ghana. Those screened positive were counselled and referred to the local government health center for confirmatory testing and management. Data from the programme were sent to the National Hepatitis Control programme at Ghana Health Service for linkage to Hepatitis care. There was an intensive awareness on the local radio and TV stations within community to draw their attention on the dangers viral hepatitis pose, prevention and management approaches. We used drama, music and dancing to raise awareness and increase their knowledge on hepatitis B and C and free Hepatitis screening.

Effectiveness: The community based mode of care intervention ensured that 'hard-to-reach' individuals benefited from the event. Different people from different backgrounds and culture benefited from the event. The model ensured community participation as the local folks took active part during the awareness and education sessions.

Conclusion and Next Steps: It is a general observation that every place where there is mining activity, you tend to find that there is raising Hepatitis prevalence. The fight against viral hepatitis and its burden on the affected families and the nation as a whole cannot be won without proactive participation by government and collaboration with Patient organizations.