



www.ghanet.net

**REPORT ON HIV SELF-TESTING QUARTER 1 RESULT-SHARING
MEETING HELD FROM 24TH TO 26TH MAY, 2023,
@ SPLENDOR HOTEL, KUMASI, ASHANTI REGION**



GHANA HIV AND AIDS NETWORK (GHANET)

INTRODUCTION

The Quarter 1 Result-Sharing Meeting of the HIV Self-Testing (HIVST) project was held in Kumasi at Splendor Hotel from 24th to 26th May, 2023. The workshop was organized by Ghana HIV and AIDS Network (GHANET), in partnership with National AIDS/STIs Control Program (NACP) and Ghana Health Service (GHS) with funding from the Global Fund (GF).

ATTENDANCE

The meeting was attended by a total number of 62, comprising Directors of Implementing Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), National Secretariat of GHANET and officials from NACP; Dr. Stephen Ayisi Addo, Program Manager, Dr. Anthony Ashinyo, Deputy Program Manager, and Dr. Kwadwo Kodua Owusu, Head of Clinical Care and Procurement and Supplies Management.

OPENING REMARKS AND PURPOSE OF MEETING

Mr. Ernest Ortsin, President of GHANET, welcomed all participants to the first Result-Sharing Workshop. He expressed admiration for the zeal and commitment Directors of the Implementing NGOs put in to make the first quarter successful. He recounted numerous instances where these people showed dedication and devotion towards the project. He emphasized that GHANET is blessed with such membership.

Mr. Ortsin announced that when undertaking a project or activity, it is essential to pause and analyze how far you have come, measure your achievements against your goals, and re-strategize when necessary, hence, the meeting. He assured participants that opportunity would be given to them to narrate some experiences from the field and every pending issue would be addressed.

Relevance of Data in HIV and AIDS Programming

According to Dr. Ayisi Addo, data is relevant in HIV and AIDS programming. Countries and organizations that invest in Data Information and Artificial Intelligence are very successful. He said he was well pleased with the idea of GHANET developing a software application purposely for the HIVST project.

He said that in HIV work, data helps to identify patterns in the spread of infections, which in turn helps in decision-making. Data is therefore very important for effective planning.



Dr. Anthony Ashinyo
Deputy Programme Manager, NACP

Demonstration of GHANET Information Management System

Mr. Ernest Ortsin made a presentation on the GHANET Information Management System (GIMS). He showed the various organizations that have been connected to the software system. Some changes were made regarding spellings and arrangements of the names of some of the organizations. He indicated that since that was the first quarter and Implementers were now getting conversant with the system and how it operates, there were few issues with the 1st quarter data. While some of these issues can be overlooked, others cannot and need to be rectified. Some data suggest that some Implementing Partners (IPs) did not put in their absolute best. He stated that critical analyses and evaluation would be done and necessary action would be taken against those found culpable. After that, he demonstrated to participants how the system works.

Mr. Ortsin mentioned that since smooth internet connectivity is a huge challenge in some parts of the country, participants need to sacrifice the late and early hours of day to upload their data, since the internet is relatively smooth during these hours. Mr. Ortsin touched on some other issues including the need for every IP on the HIVST project to have an office. Participants brought to bear some persistent challenges they faced with GIMS and the President assured them of these challenges being addressed and the system being improved.

Presentation and Analyses of Quarter 1 Results

Mr. Ortsin proceeded to present the outcome of the first quarter of the HIVST project to participants. Results from the management system was projected for participants during the presentation. Dr. Ashinyo did an analyses of the result from each IP. He noticed that some Volunteers did well by doing follow-ups on clients they distributed the kits to, to make sure they test and know their statuses. It is worth mentioning that a good number of clients who were reactive went ahead to do confirmatory tests. While some of the results of the confirmatory tests were negative, others were positive and some of these clients have already been linked to care. This is great news because even though the main goal of the HIVST project is for one to know his or her status which is towards achieving the first '95' of the '95-95-95' UNAIDS goal, linkage to care will help achieve the second '95' which will also lead to the third goal; viral suppression. Testing is the gateway to treatment and effective treatment is a great prevention tool for HIV.

Condom Programming

After a short open discussion about the analysis of the Quarter 1 results, Dr. Ashinyo made it known to participants that after the Training Workshop, Management deliberated on their request to add condoms to the test kits for distribution. This is a laudable idea because people do not only need to be told to use condoms to protect themselves. Some wish to use condoms but do not have access to them because they are either shy to buy or do not have the money. Distributing condoms alongside the test kits will go a long way to help the project. This being said, NACP promised that the next consignment of test kits will come with condoms. Participants were excited at the good news.

Dr. Ashinyo indicated that condom use is one of the best ways of preventing HIV. Condoms are made up of a thin sheath of latex rubber and they come in different sizes, shapes, colors and flavors. Condom use is one of the barrier methods of Family Planning that play a dual role; preventing unwanted pregnancies and STIs as well. It is important that people know how to use condoms correctly in order to protect themselves from HIV infections and other STDs.

Condoms can be obtained from pharmacies/ drug stores, Family Planning clinics, CSOs, etc. Condoms have both advantages and disadvantages.

Some advantages are as follows;

- Fit for all
- Help prevent ectopic pregnancies
- Increased sexual enjoyment because there is no need to worry about pregnancies or STIs
- Often help to prevent premature ejaculation by making the man last longer during sex

The disadvantages on the other hand include;

- Latex condoms may cause itching for a few people who are allergic to latex
- May decrease sensation, making sex less enjoyable
- Couple must make time to put the condoms on the erected penis before sex

Dr. Ashinyo mentioned that before one uses a condom, one should ensure to inspect the pack for manufacturing date and damage.



Mr. Ernest Ortsin
President, GHANET

Planning for Quarter 2 Activities

The Head of Clinical Care and Procurement and Supplies Management, NACP, Dr. Kwadwo Kodua Owusu congratulated participants on a successful implementation of the first quarter. He announced that funds for the second quarter of the HIVST project would soon be released. 'This time round, there is assurance that funds would be given together with the test kits so that work can start as soon as possible', he said. Also, just as Dr. Ashinyo earlier discussed, condoms would be added to the test kits in this quarter, as requested. He further gave a detailed explanation of the expectations and goals of the second quarter. He made participants aware that standards would not be lowered, neither would mediocrity be entertained. Dr. Owusu asked participants whether they had any challenges regarding the test kits and the implementation of the project and they answered in the negative.

Educating participants on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) and their preventive measures, Mr. Ernest Ortsin expounded the individual topics under the concept. He touched on some misconceptions associated with SEAH such as; victims being the cause and are to blame, women enjoying being pressured, only men being guilty of SEAH, women meaning 'yes' when they say 'no'.

Way Forward/ Closing Remarks

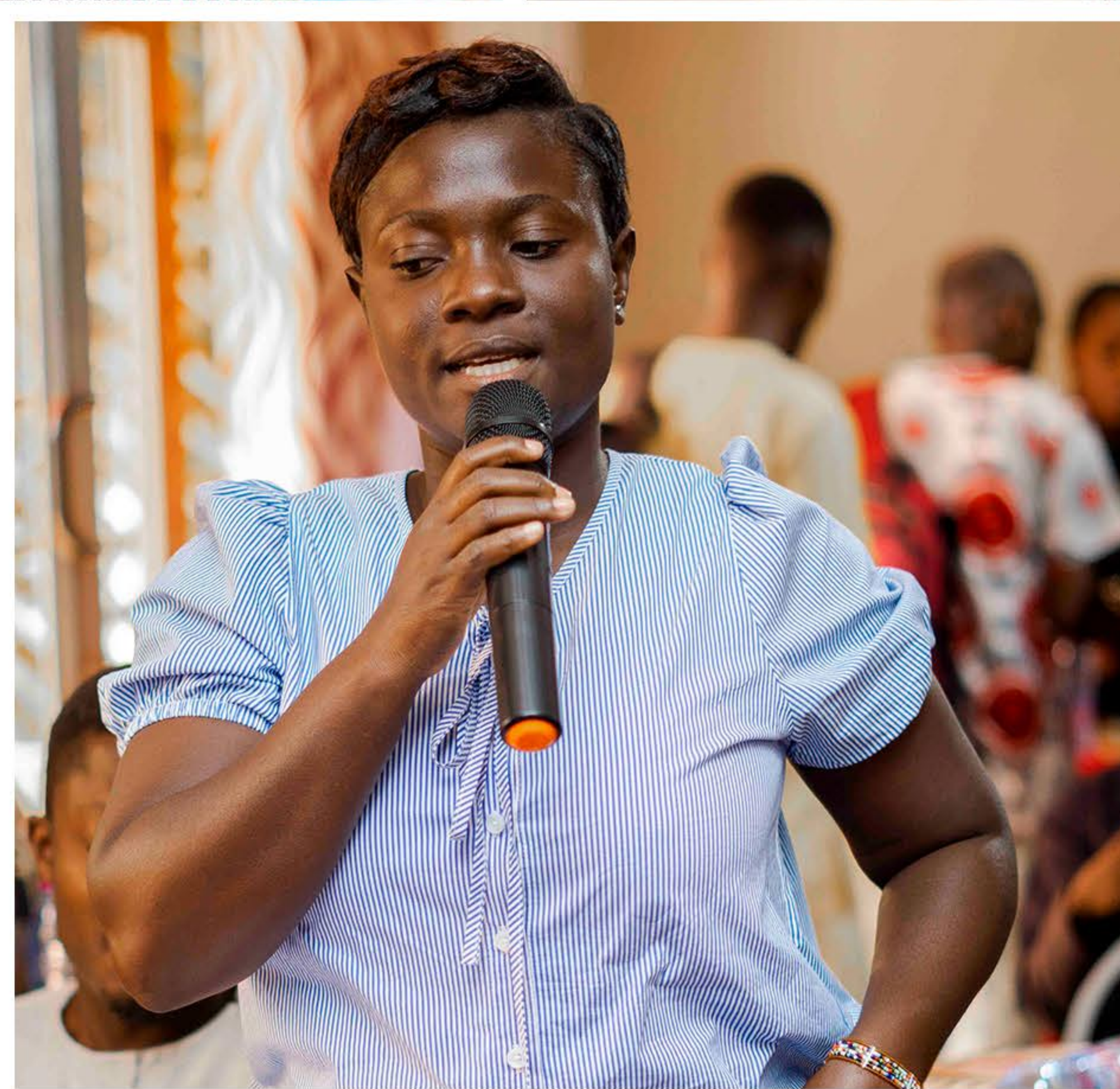
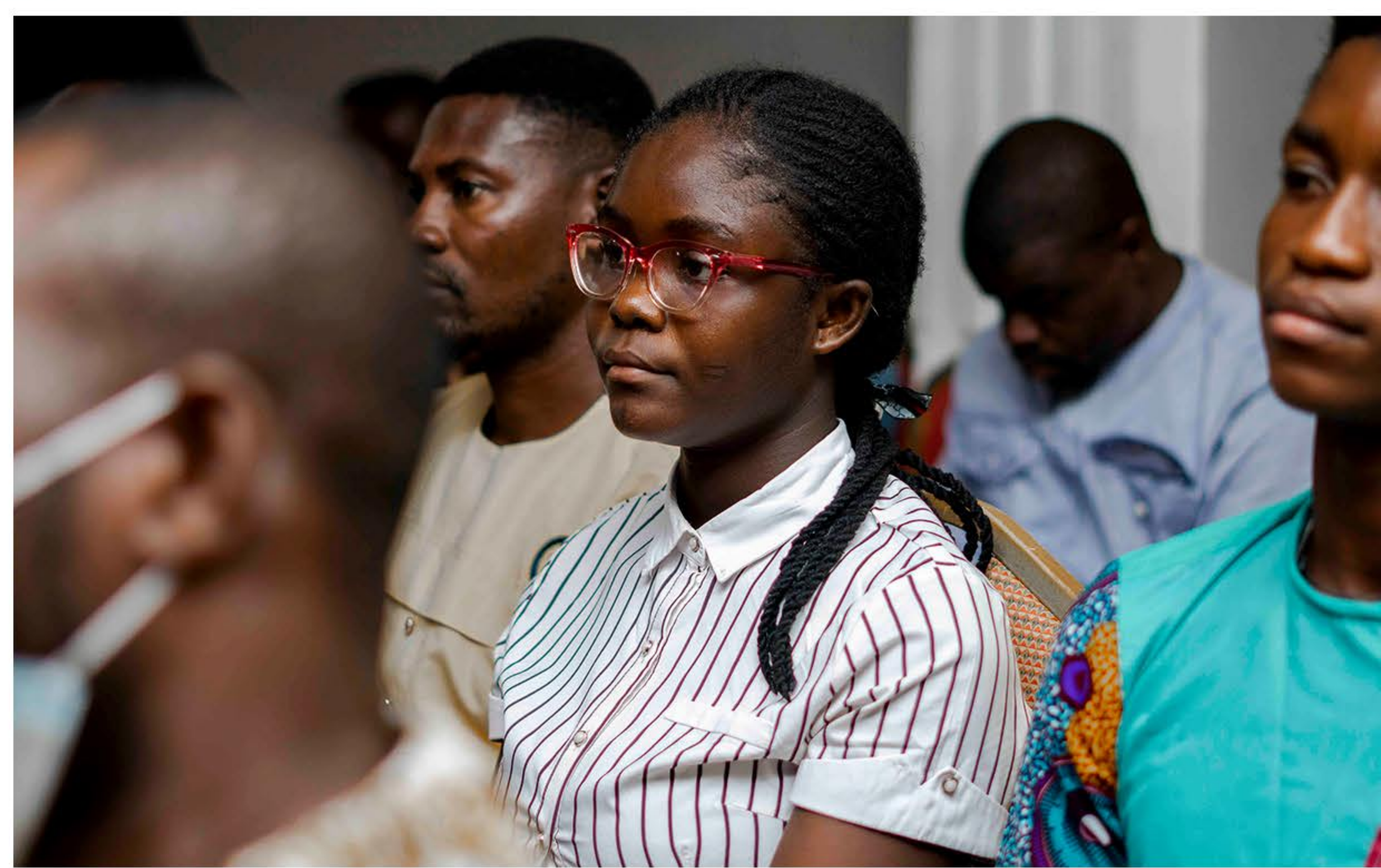
Mr. Ortsin ended the meeting by appreciating all participants for coming and always ready to be on board. He said that in case of any difficulty with linking a client to care or convincing one to go for a confirmatory test, the project counsellors are

available at the National secretariat and always ready to assist. He pleaded with participants to play their roles diligently and put in their very best in the coming quarter. "Quarter 1 was good, I hope quarter 2 would be better", he concluded.



Dr. Kwadwo Kodua Owusu
Head of Clinical Care, NACP











GHANA HIV AND AIDS NETWORK (GHANET)

REPORT ON HIV SELF-TESTING QUARTER 1 RESULT-SHARING
MEETING HELD FROM 24TH TO 26TH MAY, 2023,
@ SPLENDOR HOTEL, KUMASI, ASHANTI REGION

**National Secretariat: DH43 Biakpa CL, GA-261-3553
AMA Greater Accra. Tel No. 0302261525**

**P.O.Box MB 533, Accra-Ghana E-Mail: info@ghanet.net
Tel: 0244669898 / 0541237088 Website: www.ghanet.net**