

Empowering Mothers, Saving Lives: Portable Ultrasound Brings Hope to Rural Communities in Akuapem South Under the Safe Start Initiative

On Tuesday April 9, 2024, International Child Development Program (ICDP) Ghana, in partnership with Ultrasound Consulting International (UCI) USA, in collaboration with Ghana Health Services, Akuapim South launched the SafeStart Program at Kitase in the Akuapim South Municipality with the introduction of Portable Ultrasound Machines in rural communities.

SafeStart is an initiative to improve healthcare access and reduce preventable maternal deaths in Ghana-West Africa, through the use of diagnostic medical sonography. The aim is to improve maternal health and other conditions which will ultimately contribute to Ghana's achievements in SDG 3.

In rural communities across Ghana, access to essential healthcare services, especially during pregnancy, can be challenging. Many expectant mothers face formidable barriers to receiving timely and accurate prenatal care, leading to increased risks for both maternal and infant health. However, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Mr. Rowan Philp, the President of Ultrasound Consulting International, Florida, Akuapim South Health now have the means to bridge this gap and provide vital ante-natal diagnosis to pregnant mothers in need.

In her welcome address, Madam Emily Amponsah, Municipal Director of Ghana Health Services stated with immense joy and profound appreciation to Ultrasound Consulting LLC of Florida for the gesture of a portable ultrasound machine to support the health needs of pregnant mothers in the rural communities in the municipality. She reiterated that the machine represented far more than just a piece of medical equipment, but rather symbolized hope, empowerment, and the promise of healthier futures for countless rural mothers and their unborn babies.

She stated that there were gaps regarding availability, access and affordability of such medical equipment especially in rural communities which pose a major threat to quality of healthcare delivery in Ghana. The staff of the directorate were at the launch of this initiative to improve the ante-natal care of pregnant women and therefore was committed to this collaboration and would offer the necessary support for a successful program.

Ultrasound Consulting International is an organization focused on preventable deaths especially maternal in low- and middle-income countries. Train personnel and provide ultrasound equipment to reach rural and underserved communities.

Mr. Rowan Philp who is the President of Ultrasound Consulting International explained that the use of non-invasive medical diagnostic imaging modalities to detect diseases was an indispensable role in major clinical decisions about patient management. The use of ultrasound

imaging formed an integral part of health care because of its good visualization characteristics. He stated that placenta previa, breech babies and low-amniotic fluids could be detected by the machine. He noted that the machine tracks baby development in the womb, detects in-vitro disorders and helps connect mother with the developing fetus.

- Ultrasounds could diagnose maternal issues, liver diseases, kidney problems, poor blood circulation and other bodily ailments.
- It uses harmless sound waves to create a 2 or 3D pictures of organs in the human body.
- Much safer because there is no radiation.

Ultrasound Consulting International's mission in Ghana is to provide equipment and training to enable ICDP and the Ghana Health Service to be able to serve majority of the rural communities in Ghana for the next 5 years which could be achieved and measured.

Madam Joyce Larnyoh, Country Director of ICDP Ghana, an organization that is child and women focused, reiterated that acquisition of the Portable Ultrasound machine represented a profound commitment to the well-being and dignity of every mother and child. By investing in maternal healthcare and supporting ante-natal diagnosis, Ultrasound Consulting International demonstrated a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of health, prosperity, and human flourishing. Their generosity will undoubtedly save lives, alleviate suffering, and empower women to embrace motherhood with confidence and strength. She stated that some pregnant mothers do not access ultrasound scans to know the progression of their pregnancies throughout the 9 months. This situation unfortunately leads to debilitating consequences and outcomes, which otherwise would have been diagnosed and managed with ultrasound scans.

Madam Lydia Akuerteh, Municipal Coordinating Director, who chaired the event on behalf of the Municipal Chief Executive, expressed her gratitude to all partners, pledged their support towards the program.

Nana Kwame Boadu, Apagyahene of Kitase who represented the Chief of Kitase encouraged the people to take advantage of the program to improve their health. He implored the members to have periodic medical examinations for their general wellbeing.

The community people who spoke during the event expressed their joy of having such a device close to their doorsteps at significantly reduced rates instead of commuting to access such facilities at the district hospital. The program which is being piloted in Akwapim-South Municipality currently, would be extended to all regions in Ghana in the next 5 years.

Photo Gallery



The SafeStart Team with Health Workers



Unveiling of the Ultrasound Equipment



The Ghana Health Service and other key stakeholders accept the SafeStart Program with excitement.



The gathering during the launch of the SafeStart Program comprising health workers, traditional and religious leaders, organized groups and community people.



Ultrasound Device being demonstrated on a community member about how medical imaging boosts quality healthcare delivery



Assemblyman for the Kitase area pledging the community's support and commitment towards a successful implementation of the project.