

**LADY PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION OF GHANA (LAPAG)** is an association of lady Pharmacists in Ghana, an interest group within the Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana (PSGH), formally inaugurated in 1993.

It is a registered non-profit, non-governmental, national organization. It has the full backing of the PSGH, evidenced by the fact that the President and all the past Presidents of PSGH are patrons of LAPAG

Currently Lapag participates in meetings of the National Executive Council of PSGH as observer pending formal rectification of PSGH's constitution to make it a statutory mandate of PSGH.

**Historical Background:** At the 1991 National Conference of PSGH, women pharmacists decided to form a Female interest group within the PSGH.

This idea was mooted out of a deep desire to address identified unhealthy and sometimes harmful practices in our society, especially by women in respect to indiscriminate use and wrong handling of medicines and chemicals: like skin bleaching, excessive uses of douching, enemas, herbal preparations etc. It was felt that as women health professionals with expert knowledge about drugs and chemicals, we were better placed to address these issues than our male counterparts. Lapag however, always worked with our men and other partners since health is a multi-faceted issue. This is reflected even in our mission statement.

Over the years, through our on-going public educational interactions with the youth and women groups and associations nationwide, LAPAG has risen up to challenges like providing in addition, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION and SERVICES.

**Membership** is opened to all female Pharmacists registered to practice in the country with the Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana (PSGH). Currently we are about four hundred and fifty (450) ladies, about 35% of the total population of Pharmacists nationwide.

#### **VISION STATEMENT:**

**To Be Expert Women & Youth Health Advocates, Counselors, Educators, & Service Providers In Health For Development In Our Society.**

**Mission Statement:** LAPAG works with partners to promote good health in Ghana, through an on-going IEC / BCC programme on reproductive health , including Family Planning, STDs / HIV / AIDS and dangers of Substance / Chemical Abuse, etc., targeting women and the youth, through whom we hope to reach the entire family and the society at large.

**The Aims & Objectives of LAPAG include the following:**

- To organise continuing education for lady Pharmacists in order to enhance their professional competence and hence their contribution towards the health care needs of our society.
- To assist in promoting good health in Ghana through, an on-going public health educational campaign.
- To join hands with groups engaged in gender-related and reproductive health issues, and to advocate for better healthcare services for women & youth for the development of the nation.
- To assist in reducing the public demand for drugs & medicines by raising their awareness about the dangers associated with their misuse and abuse.
- To explore avenues of promoting cordial relations between members and women in science and technology for national health development.
- To encourage our members to seek equal involvement with other health care professionals in the discussion of ethical issues and subsequent policy making.
- To encourage our members to become actively involved in the political process: which includes policy-making decisions, regarding the provision of health care to the community thus enhancing the realization of their economic, social, educational and political aspirations.

## LAPAG ACTIVITIES:

- Training and development of LAPAG members;  
To be effective health advocates, educators, counselor & communicators, Lapag through sponsorship from partners have build capacity in acquiring additional skills and knowledge both locally & internationally in:
  - Youth & Leadership training
  - Family Planning and the Use Modern Methods of Contraceptive Techniques
  - Advances in Family health Communication
  - HIV /AIDS Prevention
  - Personal Grooming
  - UNODP Mainstreaming Drug Abuse & HIV prevention
  - Global Youth Network training on Needs Assessment & Programme Planning
  - Entertainment & Etiquettes
  
- On-going public health educational campaign and interpersonal Counseling through electronic & print media, face-to-face discussions and lectures, sensitization seminars on reproductive health issues including family planning and modern contraceptive technologies, STI/HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, menopause and cancers in women. Other health issues we are also concerned about are substance abuse and misuse, including bleaching and excessive douching.
  - Our target groups:
    - Women's groups
    - In and out-of-school youths

### Topics include:

- Prevention, Management and Control of STD'S including HIV/AIDS
- Importance of Family Planning and the Use Modern Methods of Contraceptive Techniques
- Teenage Pregnancy, Socio-Medico-Psychological Implication to the Youth, his family and the society
- Responsible medicine Use in Pregnancy and during Breastfeeding
- Dangers associated with excessive Douching and Use of Enemas.
- Understanding and Living Well With Menopause
- Dangers associated with Skin Bleaching.
- Beat cancers through early detection, screening and treatment
- Dangers Associated With the Substance Misuse and Abuse of Including Alcohol and Tobacco
- Promotion of good health and Disease Prevention through Good Personal and Environmental Hygiene

LAPAG uses special youth friendly, interactive, educational, strategy in bringing life changing messages to the youth especially.

One such method is the “Open Space Event (OSE)”, through which the youth themselves working in smaller group of ten (10), deliberate on their peculiar vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and it’s connection to DRUG ABUSE and then develop their own strategies in solving them.

It is anticipated that, they will then commit themselves to positive behaviors generated by them to reduce their own vulnerabilities.

The Poster carrying the YOUTH OF Ghana’s Strategy to Fighting HIV / AIDS, the ABC – DAF STRATEGY was developed in the 2000 as a direct outcome of an OSE organized for second cycle students in the Kumasi Metropolitan Area.

Through ENTER- EDUCATION FORMAT (i.e. education through entertainment-another innovative youth-friendly) strategy, Lapag seeks to break the monotony of formal lecturing to the youth on the best way to behave. Instead Lapag provides a stage/ forum for them to express themselves through youth friendly, entertaining but very educative media such as music, songs, poetry recitals, drama, quizzes, competition, dances (choreography), debates on HIV / AIDS & DRUG ABUSE e.t.c. with the hope that, through these performances the youth themselves will empower themselves to take concrete steps to reduce their vulnerability and commit themselves to act positively to reduce their vulnerability to drug abuse/ misuse and HIV/AIDS infections.

FUN GAMES; another youth friendly interaction, in this case the youth form teams and compete in games (both outdoor & indoor) such as table tennis, lawn tennis, scrabbles, volley ball, netball, football etc. During this time Lapag members engage them in group discussions on HIV/AIDS preventions, Drug Abuse etc. Trophies and certificates are given to participating teams and individuals.

- Philanthropic activities:  
Beneficiaries include special schools for the Children with Learning Disabilities and orphanages like:
  - Dzorwulu Special School
  - New Horizon School
  - Osu Children’s Home
  - Boadi Orphanage

## **ACTIVITIES with Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC)**

Last year, 2005 with Funding from GAC, LAPAG collaborated with GAC on a **youth project** titled

### **HIV / AIDS PREVENTION: CATCHING THEM YOUNG THROUGH SERVICE IN HEALTH FOR DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Type/s of Project**

- Peer Education
- Advocacy
- Counselling
- IEC / BBC

NO OF LISTED BENEFICIARIES: LAPAG interacted with 40 schools of about 2000 students from 20 Junior Secondary and 20 Senior Secondary schools each in the sub-urban areas in the Accra Metropolitan & Kumasi Metropolitan areas in Greater Accra and Ashanti Regions respectively.

Strategies used were: "Open Space Event", Sensitisation Seminars, Fun Games and Enter-Education, very Potent Behaviour Change Communication tools that impact greatly on the youth for positive behavioural change.

#### **STRUCTURE OF LAPAG:**

**NATIONAL & REGIONAL BRANCHES:** LAPAG is an association with members nationwide. Currently, three (3) regional branches (Greater Accra, Central / Western, and Brong Ahafo / Ashanti) have been inaugurated and are governed by regional Coordinators, Secretaries & Treasurers cum Organisers.

Regional & District Representatives: Regional & District representatives have also been appointed to coordinate LAPAG activities effectively to cover the entire nation. They liase with the national executives on all activities.

**National Executive Council:** The association is governed by the **National Executive Council** of about Ten (10) elected National Officers and Three (3) elected **Regional Coordinators**. See Attached

**CELLS:** In the big cities Lapag meets in cells. These cells are run by their elected officers who report to their Regional Coordinators. The cells meet once a month and there a regional meeting every quarter.

**PATRONS:** LAPAG has a fifteen member body of patrons who advise LAPAG on crucial matters from time to time. They also support our activities financially.

**PARTNERS:** In line with our mission statement, we have worked with other professional groups, governmental and non-governmental organisations, and international agencies in seeking to promote good health for the development of our nation Ghana. These partners include:

- ◆ Family Health International (FHI).
- ◆ Ghana Social Marketing Foundation (GSMF).
- ◆ Women's Department of Ministry of Women & Children Affairs formally National Council on Women and Development (NCWD).
- ◆ UNICEF.
- ◆ Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Washington DC.
- ◆ The Narcotics Control Board.
- ◆ Women in Science and Technology (WIST).
- ◆ International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)
- ◆ Advocacy for Women's Health.
- ◆ Society of Women Medical and Dental Practitioners.
- ◆ Association of Women in the Media (ASWIM).
- ◆ The White Ribbon Alliance.
- ◆ Women in Broadcasting.
- ◆ The National No-Tobacco Day Committee.
- ◆ The United States Agency for International Development (USAIDS).
- ◆ Ghana AIDS Commission

## **THE FUTURE.**

We have plans to activate our research activities into reproductive health and other allied problems and publish / disseminate our findings.

We also plan to officially designate members owned Community Pharmacies as Positive Reproductive Health Counseling Service Centres to offer such services to the public on Walk-In basis. These members will specially be trained to provide this service.

We also intend to intensify our outreach programmes, especially towards reducing the youth's risk for STI/HIV/AIDS and drug abuse.

This year we plan to collaborate with GAC on a project titled:  
WOMEN AS ADVOCATES FOR INCREASED UPTAKE OF ART, VCT, PMTCT – A  
LAPAG HEALTH PROMOTION INITIATIVE

### **We will target the general population specifically:**

- ❑ Community Members
- ❑ Orphans & Vulnerable  
Children, PLWHA
- ❑ LAPAGMembers
- ❑ Youth (Out-Of- School)
- ❑ General Population

Specifically we will target about 1250 beneficiaries which will include:

- ✓ 50 LAPAG Members to be trained as Trainers and Facilitators to train other Lapag members. They will give interpersonal counseling services to the 50 groups / associations and also serve in 50 designated Pharmacies on ART, VCT, and PMTCT.
- ✓ To sensitise about 200 Lapag members specifically as advocates for the promotion of the services of ART, VCT, and PMTCT and actively referring clients to such centres.
- ✓ 50 groups / associations (workplace, religious, and community development) of at least Ten persons each nationwide giving us a total of 500 persons.
- ✓ We also anticipate counseling about 500 Walk-In Clients seeking for these services at our 50 designated Pharmacies.

Last year Lapag celebrated its Twelve (12) anniversary and National Conference with the theme **“Comprehensive care for People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) - the role of the Lady Pharmacist”**.

Increasing Lapag members find themselves giving counsel beyond Pharmacotherapy & adherence counselling to PLWHAs, We therefore decided to focus on filling-in gaps in our knowledge concerning comprehensive care to PLWHAs.

We plan to hold series of seminars & workshop for our general membership on

- Anti-Retroviral Therapy
- Adherence Counselling
- Nutrition
- Personal care & Hygiene

LAPAG can undertake these activities can only when it receives adequate funding and will therefore appreciate any collaboration that will help it achieve its aim.