

14,000 women to benefit from healthcare support system

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A TOTAL of 14,000 women, including postpartum mothers, and girls living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and tuberculosis, are expected to benefit from healthcare

support system under a three-year mental health initiative.

The targeted beneficiaries between the ages of 15 and 49, comprises 7,800 pregnant women and girls, and 6,200 postpartum mothers from 28 communities and 14 districts in seven regions across the country.

Mr Peter Badimak Yaro, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Basic Needs Ghana, a mental health advocacy organisation, announced this at a meeting to discuss the implementation of the project, in Accra, yesterday.

He said the seven regions were selected because they recorded

high number of vulnerable groups with mental health issues and living with HIV and TB.

The CEO mentioned that the beneficiaries were from the Northern, North East, Savannah, Upper East, Upper West, Bono, and Greater Accra regions.

Mr Yaro said the initiative being undertaken by Basic Needs Ghana, is aimed at improving maternal and child health outcomes, for the poorest and most vulnerable women in Ghana with mental health problems living with HIV and TB.

He said his outfit was implementing the initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana Health Service (GHS), Ghana Mental Health Authority, Global Fund Ghana CCM, Ghana Aids Commission and Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies, with funding from Expertise France Groupe.

He said that from the 2020 report on mental health by the GHS, 10 to 20 per cent of women and girls and postpartum mothers experience depression.

Mr Yaro noted that according to the report, women, girls, and postpartum mothers, who experi-

enced depression, could not reveal their mental health status due to stigmatisation.

He said socio-economic difficulties were contributing to mental health challenges among women as they struggled to manage their basic needs.

"The stress of financial instability, coupled with the fear of transmitting HIV to their unborn children, created a heavy psychological burden," Mr Yaro explained.

He said "these women had little access to mental health services, a situation that was particularly dire in rural and impoverished urban areas. While some healthcare facilities were available, they were often under-resourced and lacked specialised mental health services needed to address the complex needs of pregnant women living with HIV and TB."

A Psychiatrist at the Accra Psychiatry Hospital, Dr Susan Seffah, who represented the Ghana Mental Health Authority, urged relevant stakeholders to forge stronger collaborations in the fight against mental health, especially, among women and girls living with HIV and TB.



• Mr Peter Yaro (middle) with other stakeholders after the meeting **Photo: Seth Osabukle**