



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Urgent Call for Gender-Responsive PHC: ARHR Challenges Government on 2024 UHC DAY**

On Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day, the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights (ARHR) calls on the government to take decisive action to ensure a gender-responsive Primary Health Care (PHC) system that centers the health and well-being of women and girls.

As the global community marks UHC Day under the theme, “**Health, it’s on the Government,**” ARHR emphasizes that achieving UHC in Ghana requires addressing the specific, often unmet health needs of women, adolescents, and marginalized groups.

In a country where inequalities still exist in healthcare access, UHC systems mustn't be only universal in coverage but also responsive to gendered realities. Gender-responsive PHC includes creating an environment where women and girls can access care safely, with dignity, and without fear of discrimination or financial burden.

The government has a fundamental responsibility to create a health system that leaves no one behind. Women and girls, in particular, face unique barriers in accessing health services, including intersecting factors.

With five years remaining to attain the global UHC commitments by 2030, Ghana’s implementation of a gender-responsive PHC system is critical to ensuring progress and sustainability in health equity.

#### **Key Areas for Gender-Responsive UHC:**

##### **1. Training Health Providers to Deliver Gender-Responsive Care**

For UHC to be truly gender-responsive, healthcare providers must be trained to recognize and address the specific health needs of women and girls. This includes training that ensures that healthcare workers are equipped to provide care that respects gender equity, cultural sensitivities, and women’s rights, promoting an environment of dignity and trust.

##### **2. Strengthening Gender-Responsive Health Financing**

Ghana must increase the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) enrolment for women and girls by addressing barriers to access. Also, the NHIS benefits package must be enhanced to ensure that the package adequately meets the diverse health needs of women and adolescents, with a focus on equitable care.

##### **3. Empowering Women in Decision-Making and Leadership**

Tangible efforts must be made to foster opportunities for women to take up leadership roles in the health sector by creating supportive environments and addressing systemic barriers to leadership and participation.

##### **4. Prioritizing Gender Responsiveness in Government Strategic Reform Efforts and Policies**

Gender-focused initiatives could be embedded in key reforms by integrating gender-responsive service design and delivery into high-priority and well-funded initiatives

such as Networks of Practice, and other strategic programs- while ensuring adequate financial and human resources are dedicated to gender-responsive components within these initiatives.

### **5. Enhancing Gender-Disaggregated Data in Health Sector Decision-Making**

Ghana could improve health sector data collection and information systems to more effectively generate data and information on women and girls in all their diversity, and use these gender-related data for informed decision-making.

### **6. Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

Ghana's health system must be prepared to provide support for survivors of gender-based violence, including providing access to emergency care, mental health services, and legal aid. A gender-responsive PHC should guarantee that women and girls who experience violence are treated with compassion and dignity, and that their health needs are met promptly and thoroughly.

### **ARHR's Call to Action**

On 2024 UHC Day, ARHR calls on the government of Ghana to:

- Prioritize gender in UHC policy design and implementation, ensuring that health systems cater to the diverse needs of women and girls, particularly those in marginalized communities.
- Allocate sufficient resources to reproductive health, maternal care, and gender-based violence services to ensure they are available and accessible to all women, everywhere.
- Strengthen data collection systems to capture gender disparities in health access and outcomes, ensuring that policies are evidence-based and targeted at closing gaps.
- Work with Civil Society Organizations to increase awareness of gender disparities in health and advocate for policies that promote the health and rights of women and girls.

ARHR reminds the government that healthcare is a fundamental human right. No one should be left behind when it comes to accessing healthcare. UHC must be built on the foundation of gender equity, ensuring that women and girls have the agency, voice, and power to make informed decisions about their health and that their health needs are fully met.

We call on the government to take bold steps, invest in gender-responsive health systems, and make UHC a reality for everyone in Ghana.

### **About ARHR**

ARHR is a Ghanaian Non-Governmental Organization that works to ensure that women, children and adolescents health is achieved through advocacy, research and capacity building for inclusive, responsive, accountable and equitable delivery of health services.

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