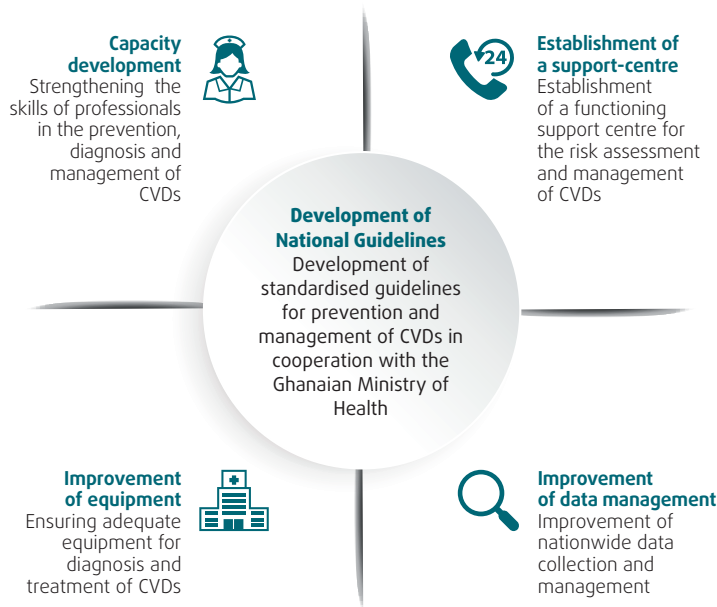




What is the GHI?

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) present a growing burden for low- and middle-income countries across the globe. To face this challenge, the Bayer AG, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Ghanaian health institutions have joined hands to co-design an integrated diagnosis, treatment, and training pilot project in line with Bayer's strategy to strengthen health care systems. This project, the Ghana Heart Initiative (GHI), aims at improving the prevention, diagnosis and management of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) at tertiary, secondary and primary level of care in Ghana. Implemented in close cooperation with the Ghanaian Ministry of Health as well as the Ghana Health Service, the GHI seeks to sustainably improve the treatment standards, capacity of health professionals as well as data management on CVDs.



The importance of the GHI?

CVD is a rapidly increasing health challenge in Ghana and has become a leading cause of morbidity and mortality. Stroke, for example, is one of the most common causes of death in the country's adult population.

First results exemplify how early diagnosis, adequate treatment and close monitoring can reduce the fatal consequences of CVDs: After the training and mentoring of health workers through the GHI, the proportion of patients with an elevated blood pressure identified, put on treatment, continued treatment and reached a controlled blood pressure increased. The proportion of those, who have reached a controlled blood pressure, increased from 7% to an average of 77% during the project duration indicating that the management of hypertension improved in the beneficiary health facilities.

However, the public health care system continues to face a critical shortage of resources and capacities, seriously hindering an effective response to this mounting CVD burden. The GHI seeks to rally all important Ghanaian health stakeholders to jointly address this challenge.



What has been achieved already?

- National Guidelines for the management of CVDs (incl. App for continuous access) have been developed and approved by the Ministry of Health (MoH).
- More than 1700 health professionals are using the developed AkomaCare App facilitating access to the guidelines.
- Facilitator's Guides, manuals for CVD training, have been developed for doctors and physician assistants as well as nurses.
- 4295 medical professionals from all levels of care and of more than 190 health facilities have been trained.
- A mentorship network has been established and 26 mentors have been trained to provide supportive supervision on CVD management to all health facilities targeted.
- Equipment worth 700,000€ has been procured and deployed to more than 190 health facilities.
- 9 centres with 74 trained specialists for the diagnosis and treatment of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) have been established in cooperation with the University Center Hamburg-Eppendorf.
- A 24/7 CVD Support & Call Centre has been launched.
- Nationwide data management has been improved.

Overall, the GHI has already reached more than 3 million Ghanaians who needed CVD treatment and benefitted from improved medical services.





What are the prospects of the GHI?

To ensure full scalability and long-term impact, the Bayer AG and the GHI extended the project partnership and seek to include additional actors from both the private as well as public sector. The vision is to use the established structures and networks to transition the Ghana Heart Initiative into a Ghana Health Initiative. In this way, the GHI will be extended from focusing solely on CVDs to addressing NCDs in general. Insights gained through the GHI can thereby become drivers for an even broader health initiative in Ghana.

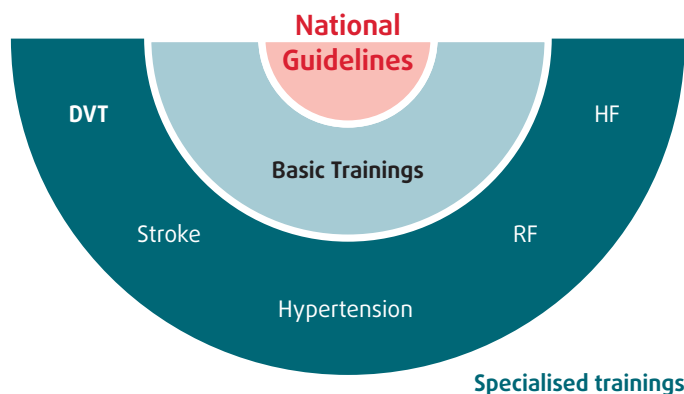
Scaling up the GHI beyond 2021

The aim of the new GHI beyond 2021 phase is to scale up the project in coverage and activities to further improve the management of CVDs in Ghana. Precise targets for the scale up until May 2024 are:

- Conduct community-based screenings of 10,000 persons in urban and peri-urban coastal communities of Greater Accra Region to identify 3,000 patients with hypertension, refer them for treatment, keep them in treatment and achieve a controlled blood pressure.
- Train more than 960 health professionals from 120 health facilities on the management of CVDs.
- Develop an E-Learning course on CVD management to allow for continuous in-service training.
- Provide equipment worth 200,000€ to 120 health facilities.
- Integrate gamification elements into the AkomaCare app.

Scaling up the GHI in depth into the Ghana Health Initiative

Through the GHI's achievements, the management of NCDs will be improved in a sustainable and coordinated manner within the Ghana Health Initiative. By means of a modular approach and based on the already existing project structure, different project components may be added. Thereby, synergies are created, and impacts are leveraged to achieve tangible improvements of NCD management in Ghana.



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