

Summary of press conference on health insurance of “ARCH project”

Cotonou, 11th March 2020

Context

The most prominent project to ensure social protection in Benin is ARCH, with a total budget of 313 billion FCFA for its four components of implementation. However, the most important component of ARCH is AM-ARCH (ARCH health insurance), who launched a pilot phase on July 29, 2019. However, very little has been done in terms of communication around the project. For example, the population was unaware of the criteria for selecting beneficiaries and pilot zones, as well as the contents of the health care package. Beneficiaries were also unaware of how care is provided in the health facilities. It is within this framework that the UGP-ARCH, with the technical and financial support of ACS Benin organized a press conference on Tuesday 11 February 2020 to communicate on the evolution of the process of the health insurance pilot.

Preparatory phase

ACS Benin provided significant technical, logistical and financial support to the organization of this press conference whose preparations took place in 4 stages:

- Consultation meeting between the ACS Benin team and UGP-ARCH. During the meeting, the parties agreed on the essential tasks to be completed and the responsibilities incumbent on both sides.
- Meeting between ACS Benin and the communication team of the Ministry of Social Affairs with UGP to discuss the terms of reference of the press conference, persons and communication agencies to invite and the timeline
- Preparatory day between all stakeholders: UGP-ARCH, ACS and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance to finalize the agenda, roles, responsibilities and contents of the press conference.
- And finally the meeting with the journalists for the press conference itself.

Overview of the press conference

The main objective of the press conference was to communicate the progress of the health insurance component of the ARCH project (AM-ARCH). At the press conference, a total of 44 (conventional television, online TV, radio, newspapers, online print media) were present to exchange on what is AM-ARCH, the contents of the basket of care, the selection criteria and the selection process of the beneficiaries of the pilot phase. The speakers were: the UGP-ARCH Coordinator and his deputy, the Coordinator of Abomey-Calavi/So-Ava Health District (One of the pilot zone), the Head of the So-Ava Social Promotion Centre, some beneficiaries of the pilot phase and journalists.

- The UGP-ARCH Coordinator gave a brief summary of the project, especially the AM-ARCH component. He then gave an update on the implementation of the pilot phase in the pilot health zones and briefly reviewed the basket of care and the beneficiary selection process.
- The Coordinator of Abomey-Calavi/So-Ava Health District gave also a overview of the contents of the care basket and the beneficiaries care providing process in the health facilities

involved in the pilot phase. He then thanked UGP-ARCH for the provision of drugs amounting to 47,000,000 FCFA to strengthen the care.

- The head of the So-Ava Social Promotion Centre explained the process of selection and identification of beneficiaries of the pilot phase, i.e. the extreme poor at the community level until the RAVIP identification biometric cards are obtained.

- Some of the beneficiaries of the pilot phase were also present. Agassa-Godomey testified on the selection and care process. He explained how he was selected and benefited from care once the need arose.

The sixty (62) journalists present asked questions and received answers and clarifications. The questions focused on:

- The beneficiaries' knowledge or not of the contents of the care basket
- Description of the profile of the beneficiaries
- The communication system in place
- Criteria for the selection of communes for the pilot phase

Based on the press conference, journalists now feel confident that they can communicate better about the project in order to reach as many people as possible.

According to the UGP-ARCH coordinator, the results have been positive and palpable. He says, "as of February 9, 2020, we have an invoice of 4 million vis-à-vis the health centers for the care of about 2000 beneficiaries with a payment period of one month for the invoices." Very satisfied, the coordinator of the UGP-ARCH thanked the ACS project and USAID for the technical and financial support to this important event, a first in terms of communication for the ARCH project.

Next steps

ACS will continue its support the elaboration of a communication plan and its implementation for the pilot, while also supporting a communication strategy at the community-level, with a focus on beneficiaries.