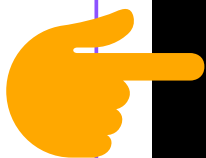


THE GAMBIA



JULY - SEPTEMBER 2019

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Women must therefore, be adequately represented in leadership, she reiterated.

Speaking at the ceremony, the UNFPA The Gambia Representative, highlighted that, we cannot expect national development, if half of the population is left behind. This he said, is why UNFPA is working to ensure women are not left behind and that their rights and well-being is prioritised.



Bringing together 40 women leaders, the training will equip participants with the requisite skills to build their leadership capacities and ensure that their responsibility as women leaders to foster peace and contribute towards building resilient communities, is strengthened.

It should be noted that, there can be no peace without inclusion. Women, men, girls and boys alike, must all be part of the development process of any country, if the attainment of sustainable development is what such country anticipates.

Moreover, ensuring a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled, depends on the existence of peace, protection of the fundamental human rights of all persons and the promotion of good governance and leadership.

Women’s participation in leadership and decision making, is a prerequisite for socio-economic advancement. It is the bedrock for laying a strong foundation for a community where rights are protected and wellbeing is promoted for all, thus, creating the right atmosphere for the enjoyment of good health, including sexual and reproductive health.

On 2 July 2019, UNFPA The Gambia Representative, Kunle Adeniyi and the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare of The Gambia, Mrs Fatou Kinteh, presided over the opening of a three-day Women’s Leadership Training.

Organised by the Women’s Bureau and facilitated by UN Women Africa, the training is part of activities funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) through UNFPA The Gambia’s Women & Youth project, aimed at promoting an increase in women and youth participation in decision-making and peace building processes in The Gambia. According to the Hon. Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare,

“women’s leadership is synonymous to success and trying to attain development without women, is like climbing a greasy pole”.

UNFPA AND GOVERNMENT OF THE GAMBIA HOST NATIONAL CELEBRATION OF WORLD POPULATION DAY AND OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF SWOP 2019 IN THE GAMBIA

In 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, commitments were made to ensure rights & choices for all are pursued. Have these promises been kept?

There is no doubt that the Government of the Gambia in collaboration with its development partners, notably UNFPA, deserves applause for decades of work in ensuring women, youth and adolescent access to reproductive health and rights is guaranteed, access to quality education and combating all forms of discrimination against the girl child and women.



The country has taken giant steps to enact legislation and policies prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

and child marriage. The Government has put in place a transitional justice and reform process including the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, a Constitutional Review Commission, among others, that are aimed to protect the fundamental human rights of the citizenry. It is safe to say that; our democracy is developing with increased citizen participation.

However, despite rigorous efforts and interventions, The Gambia still has a long way to go in achieving ICPD commitments. Although maternal mortality has been halved in the period 2001 to 2013 respectively, the number of women we lose to preventable maternal deaths still remains far above SDG global target of fewer than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

In addition, maternal mortality accounts for 36% of all deaths among women in reproductive age in The country. Infant mortality on the other hand though significantly dropped, from 75 to 34 deaths per 1000 live births during the period 2001 to 2013, still falls short of the global target of at least, as low as 25 deaths per 1000 live births.

As the world commemorated World Population Day 2019 on 11 July, UNFPA The Gambia and the Government of The Gambia, on 17 July 2019, led the country's World Population Day celebration and official launch of the State of World Population (SWOP) Report 2019.

This year's World Population Day, which focuses on the theme: "ICPD+25: Accelerating the Promise", calls for strategic action to accelerate the implementation of the ideals of the ICPD agenda, while the SWOP 2019 theme dubbed "Unfinished Business: The Pursuit of Rights and Choices for all", emphasises the need for strengthened partnerships in investing in key populations everywhere, including The Gambia.

Speaking at the joint commemoration, UNFPA The Gambia Representative, Mr. Kunle Adeniyi highlighted that, in The Gambia since 1994, Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) have been halved, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped and more girls are in school today than there were twenty-five years ago. As such, he said, we must celebrate the gains realised and went on to add that, we must however, be reminded that, smarter investments must be made to ensure that Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, among many other issues affecting women and young people especially, are eradicated.

In her keynote and launch statement, Her Excellency the Vice President of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Touray, mentioned that, we must manage our population with the little resources we have, by improving the quality of lives of all Gambians, especially in the areas of education, health, mobility and employment. She concluded by highlighting that, the 2019 SWOP, signals the need to increase Family Planning uptake and invest in wider Health System strengthening.

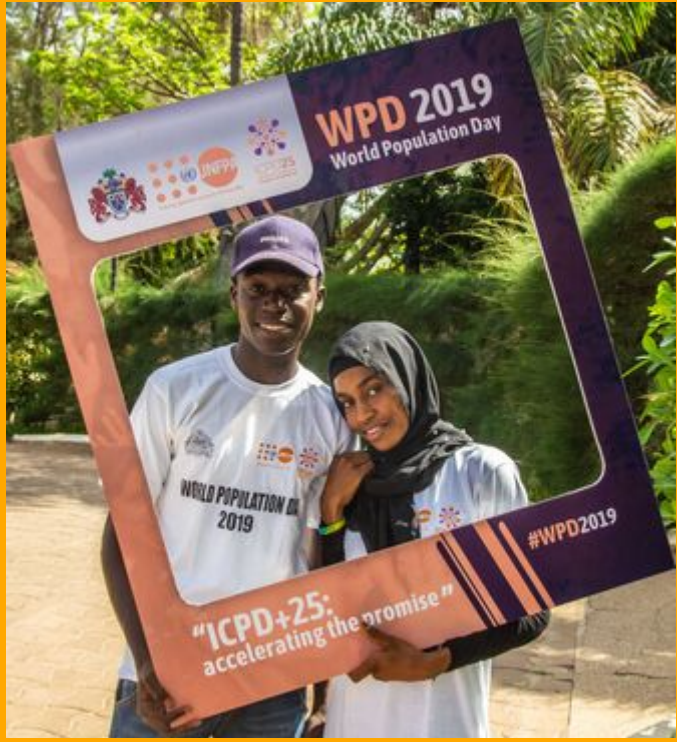
The event also saw the presentation of The Gambia's Five-Year Review Report on the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development Beyond 2014, the development of which was led by the National Population Commission Secretariat, with support from UNFPA The Gambia.

It is important to note that, the global reproductive rights movement that began in the '60s, transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of women, empowering them to govern their bodies and shape their futures. Despite the progress over the past fifty years since the establishment of UNFPA, the world still has a long way to go before rights and choices are claimed by all.



2019 is the year to strengthen partnerships and renew commitments for strategic investments in the interest of the women in communities furthest behind in The Gambia with little or no access to their basic needs, for the young people whose dreams of becoming leaders in community are too distant from reality they are faced with and to the adolescent girls and boys, who without guidance, the right education and protection, will not experience the life they deserve.

2019 is the year to shift the trend and make a difference and actively contribute to this moment of making history, for our children and their children to come, because power, voice and choice, shape the degree of agency an individual has within any relationship.



GOVERNMENT OF THE GAMBIA HOSTS UNFPA@50 PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATION DINNER



A highlight of UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem's visit to The Gambia, was the UNFPA@50 partnership celebration dinner, hosted by the Government of The Gambia on 8 August 2019, at the Labranda Coral Beach Hotel.

This dinner was a gathering to celebrate an amazing story, shaped by our collective experiences and framed by our varied journeys towards ensuring rights and choices for all. It should be noted that, this story began 25 years ago in Cairo, where 10,757 people, motivated by the possibility of a future where the 10-year-old girl and boy would be safe and free to explore and achieve her or his full potential, engaged in a week-long deliberation to redefine what the world considered Population and Development. Today, as a result, their hard work is reflected in the International Conference on Population and Development's Programme of Action.

Speaking at the dinner, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem, recognised the Government of The Gambia's demonstrated commitment to the ICPD agenda, by its continuous promotion of Universal Access to Reproductive Health Care Services, the Provision of free Maternal and Child Health Services in public facilities and by respecting the rights of adolescents and youth to access information and services related to reproductive health. She went on to emphasise that, it is as such no surprise that, The Gambia has seen a significant reduction in maternal mortality, fertility and under-five and infant mortality rates and such progress excites us at UNFPA.

“I am positive that in the spirit of celebrations we will renew our partnerships, grow our networks and find renewed strength to keep pushing the reproductive health agenda. For 50 years, we at UNFPA have dedicated our lives, time and resources to delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and where every young person's potential is fulfilled. And as I look forward to the next 50 years ahead of us, I extend an arm to all of you here tonight to come on board and work with us to achieve this mission together. Because as the African Proverb says ‘Two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper’, let us wine and dine tonight and in unity take the world by storm tomorrow!”



Her Excellency the Vice President of The Republic of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Touray, reiterated that, Fifty years of leading the way in the area of population and development and forty-seven years in The Gambia is no small feat. According to her, in the past years, when the issue of women's and girls' rights was not fashionable, UNFPA kept the trail blazing, providing the oversight, coordination and necessary resources for countries like The Gambia, to ensure that everyone, everywhere, has equal access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, information and services.



“The problems that were discussed in 1994 in Cairo, are still a reality for some people even here in The Gambia and every single one of us, has a responsibility to ensure that we develop sustainable solutions to deal with these challenges.”

Her Excellency the Vice President concluded her remarks by assuring the UNFPA Executive Director and the entire gathering that, the Government of The Gambia supports the match to Nairobi; a national ICPD review has been completed, currently, consultations are underway for the finalisation of the National ICPD commitments for the Nairobi Summit and the government will support a high-level delegation to the Nairobi Summit, to renew our national commitments to the ICPD agenda.

At the celebration dinner, paintings reflecting the work and interest of UNFPA, were exhibited and a beautiful spoken-word poetry flash mob, was performed by members of AfriYAN The Gambia. This was the climax of the evening and gave each guest, something to think about as we head to Nairobi and as the world prepares to renew its commitment to finish the unfinished business of ensuring rights and choices for all.

GAMBIAN YOUNG PEOPLE HOST ROAD TO NAIROBI TEMPERATURE CHECK WITH UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DR. NATALIA KANEM

Young people have always and continue to be the heart of the work UNFPA does. As 2019 is a milestone year for UNFPA as it marks the 50th anniversary of the agency's existence and the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, we are reminded that investing in young people, is the only way to sustainable development.

This is why, on 8 August 2019, immediately upon arrival in The Gambia, UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, accompanied by UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Director Mr. Mabingue Ngom and his team, engaged with Gambian young people, at a Youth Bantaba, dubbed "Road to Nairobi Temperature Check with Dr. Natalia Kanem".



The Bantaba, an event organised by UNFPA The Gambia, the National Youth Council and AfriYAN The Gambia, brought together nearly 200 young people from various parts of the country, to discuss the ICPD agenda, the contributions of Gambian young people towards the realisation of the Programme of Action thus far, and the commitments required from the part of youth, in order to finish the unfinished business.

Hosted by a vibrant young woman, Ms. Fatou Lamin Jeng, the Bantaba was characterised by candid conversations and idea exchange, but also, created a fun environment for young people-led entertainment.

The female DJ, Ms. Mariama Colley stunned the crowd with her ability to use music to entertain and engage young people like herself.

The Bantaba was also an opportunity to shed light on the vibrant work of young Gambian women entrepreneurs and provided a space for some of them to exhibit their Made in The Gambia products, with the aim of highlighting the linkages between women's economic empowerment and the realisation of their sexual and reproductive health and rights and protection from all forms of gender-based violence.

Speaking to the gathering of young people, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem highlighted that, UNFPA stands ready to continue working with young people and other partners, to deliver this world – where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled

Part of the interventions made during the course of the Bantaba was an appeal from a member of the Children's National Assembly, that they be represented in the Gambian delegation to Nairobi.

At the end of the bantaba, a gift representing the country and its culture, was presented to the Executive Director, by Ms. Fatou Jeng of AfriYAN The Gambia, on behalf of young people of the country.



Gambian President H.E. Adama Barrow Receives UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem on a Courtesy Visit

Being her first official visit to The Gambia as Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem, paid a courtesy visit to His Excellency the President of the Republic of The Gambia, Mr. Adama Barrow, where they discussed issues around UNFPA's support to the government and people of The Gambia, and the country's commitment to the ICPD agenda.

His Excellency the President, used the occasion to congratulate UNFPA on its 50th anniversary and commended the agency for the life-saving work it continues to lead in the country, in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights, addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices and empowering young people to reach their fullest potential.

On her part, the Executive Director, expressed UNFPA's appreciation to the government of The Gambia, for creating an environment that is conducive to enable the agency perform its mandate in the country. The meeting was also used to inform His Excellency the President about the Road to Nairobi and the significance of having national commitments to take to the summit, come November 2019.



DELIVERING RESULTS THROUGH PEACEBUILDING: UNFPA THE GAMBIA RECOGNISED FOR SUPPORTING WORK PROMOTING UNSCR 1325 AND SUBSEQUENT ONES



She went on to emphasise that, The Gambia is privileged to have the support of UN agencies such as UNFPA, who have been a long-standing partner to the country.

According to the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare, Mrs. Fatou Kinteh, wherever there is conflict, women and young people are the most vulnerable groups. However, she added, these two groups, play a key role in maintaining peace in our societies.

The honourable Minister concluded by commending the Working Group for recognising the efforts of development partners and encouraged that the private sector in The Gambia, is invited to be part of the group and engage in its peace promotion and peacebuilding efforts.

UNFPA's mandate to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled, cannot be realised without the presence of peace. This is why, UNFPA The Gambia continues to accompany the government and people of The Gambia, to drive the peace agenda.

This is evident in UNFPA-led interventions seeking to address Gender-Based Violence and harmful practices, preventable maternal deaths and investing in young people in The Gambia and most recently, in leading the implementation of the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund's Project on Increasing Women and Youth Participation in Decision-Making and as Agents of Community Conflict Prevention.

On Monday 19 August 2019, UNFPA The Gambia received an award of recognition from the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security for West Africa and the Sahel (WGWYPS-WAS) Gambia Chapter, for the support the agency continues to extend to the Working Group, in the promotion and implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent ones, on the involvement of women and youth in conflict prevention and peace building mechanisms.

Speaking at the award ceremony, the Chairperson of the National Women's Council, Mrs. Dea Sawaneh, highlighted that, without peace, no development is possible.



ON THE ROAD TO ERADICATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: MOBILISING MEN AND BOYS AS CRITICAL ACTORS

**“Be a man!” “Big boys do not cry!”
“Stop acting like a girl!”**



Acknowledging the roles and contributions of men to the movement and transformation of social norms to attain gender equality, UNFPA The Gambia supported The Girls' Agenda through the National Youth Council, to engage young men and boys in campaigns meant to address GBV in general and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in particular. Held from the 6 to 7 September 2019, this activity brought together 200 participants from several communities within the West Coast Region and several organisations including the Gambia Scouts Society and the Gambia Red Cross Society.

During the engagements, the young men were introduced to the types, effects and more so statistics on GBV, providing them with an analysis of the current situation in the country and why we need to act and act now, to end this menace. They were also introduced to the domestic legal frameworks and capacitated on how to make their voices count in the End-FGM movement.

“We did not only train but connected and inspired our participants to take action against FGM and serve as champions for gender equality and women's empowerment”.

These were the words of Oumie Sissokho Kinteh, Partnerships and Networking Manager of The Girls' Agenda, reflecting on the activity.

Change is slowly taking place and with every day that goes by and through every engagement, we are a person, community and a nation closer to meeting the zero gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices agenda. It goes beyond these spaces and just 200 young men and boys, but this is the start to lasting change and sustainable development.

These statements that come out seemingly light, uttered to young boys and men to depict strength and manhood, has gravely affected men and how they relate to the opposite sex. In many Gambian communities, boys from an early age, are taught to be tough, to own power and treat women as their inferiors. This is manifested in their day to day engagements with their female counterparts, and has created a breeding ground for structural violence in the forms of domestic violence, sexual harassment and assault, physical and psychological abuse. Even though more conversations are being steered in communities, schools and other institutions about the need to eradicate Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and some cases are now being reported, there is the need for more work with young men and boys in communities, to ensure that they become a part of the solution to GBV and to ensure that women and girls, access equal opportunities, are treated with respect and dignity and are accorded their fundamental human rights.

It should be noted that, acts of violence, including GBV, often emanate from people that are supposed to be the protectors of women, spaces where they are meant to find peace and within the comforts of their safety, it is only fair and timely, that the attention of men especially young boys, is drawn to these acts of violence, how they affect women and importance of the peaceful co-existence of the genders.

25 TRAINERS COMPLETE 10-DAY TRAINING ON EARLY WARNING, PEACEBUILDING AND MECHANISMS FOR EFFECTIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Following the 22-year autocratic rule The Gambia was subjected to, the Government of The Gambia with support from development partners, including UNFPA The Gambia, has been working to restructure and provide a conducive, social and political environment characterised by the peace The Gambia is known for, while ensuring that key populations such as women and young people are actively involved in these processes.

On Friday 20 September 2019, UNFPA the Gambia Country Representative, Kunle Adeniyi, presided over the closing ceremony of a ten-day training of trainers on Early Warning, Peacebuilding and Mechanisms for Effective Dispute Resolution, organised by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) – The Gambia. The training as part of the activities funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, through UNFPA The Gambia, graduated the first cohort of 25 peace trainers from various communities and backgrounds.



The National Network Coordinator of WANEP The Gambia, Ms. Salama Njie, speaking at the closing ceremony, expressed her delight and appreciation to UNFPA for providing the support needed to implement this project. This project provided an avenue for engagement and a platform to share ideas, relevant skills and knowledge, on cultural practices in conflict management and peacebuilding.”

She urged the new trainers to go back to their communities and be champions of peace and further emphasised that the role of the new trainers in the society, is key especially as the country approaches the 2021 elections in these trying times of managing conflict and differences.

One of the trainers, Dr Eze, reiterated the words of Salama, emphasising the sense of responsibility levied on the new trainers, their roles in national development and most importantly, advancing the peace agenda in everything they do. He urged them to share the knowledge gained from the training as “peace starts with self but it is grown and fostered in our spaces, communities and nations.”

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Mr Cham extended his appreciation to UNFPA The Gambia, WANEP and most especially the trainers. In his words “we have attended a lot of trainings, but this training in particular, has instilled in us great human values. We do respect you for your knowledge. We respect you for your humility and most definitely we do love your distinct human qualities.

Delivering the Keynote address, UNFPA The Gambia Country Representative, Kunle Adeniyi, stressed that “peace remains critical and the bedrock of every development”, adding that “a nation is in the hearts of the people not the geographic location”. Kunle went on to challenged the new trainers to take up responsibility and implement the knowledge acquired, as the “achievement is beyond the certificates given, but it is what happens outside of the room.”

Beyond the ten-day activity, a feedback mechanism will be in place to ensure sustainability of the project and the trainers, while a peace training manual will be produced by WANEP to guide peacebuilding and inclusion efforts in the country.

The capacitated trainees, will in turn facilitate step-down trainings at various levels, in support of the ongoing peace and stabilisation agenda in The Gambia. As such, the training will go a long way in addressing the capacity gaps and the lack of in-depth knowledge and skills to assist peacebuilding practitioners to efficiently contribute to the stabilisation agenda.



LEVERAGING THE POWER OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATORS TO PROMOTE PEACE AND ENHANCE COMMUNITY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



In doing this, community and traditional structures that are already in place, must be used to ensure that information and knowledge, filters down to the grassroots and that no one is left behind. One of such traditional information sharing mechanisms, is the traditional communicator groups.

Traditional Communicators, locally called the “Kenyeleng”, are known for disseminating information at community level, through drama and songs. They are a critical and vital medium in mobilising people through their renowned entertainment channels and in addressing issues affecting their surroundings.

ACTIVISTA The Gambia with support from UNFPA The Gambia through the UN Peacebuilding Fund's Women and Youth Project in The Gambia, on 25 September, commenced the training of thirty (30) Traditional Communicator groups across the country, on peace and conflict management. These 30 traditional communicator groups will serve as agents of peace in their communities, be a medium of information sharing on women and youth's political participation, address the need to protect and promote their rights and the reintegration of migrant returnees. The 30 groups combined a total of 180 women from existing traditional communicator groups in communities. In addition to these women, 60 young men and women representing various youth organisations, schools and ACTIVISTA regional volunteers, were also trained to facilitate experience sharing and widen the scope and reach of the new knowledge learnt within community and school levels.

In the absence of peace, women, young people and children, bear the bigger brunt. Their wellbeing and safety is hindered and the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, not guaranteed. This is why, they must always be actively involved in processes that will ensure stability and prevent conflict. In doing this, community and traditional structures that are already in place, must be used to ensure that information and knowledge, filters down to the grassroots and that no one is left behind. One of such traditional information sharing mechanisms, is the traditional communicator groups.

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In the absence of peace, women, young people and children, bear the bigger brunt. Their well being and safety is hindered and the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, not guaranteed. This is why, they must always be actively involved in processes that will ensure stability and prevent conflict.

Held in the West Coast, North Bank, Lower River, Central River and Upper River Regions of The Gambia, the training introduced participants to the basic concepts of democracy, rights and responsibilities, the need for peace and tolerance, need for women and youth leadership, and re-integration of both victims of human trafficking and irregular migrant returnees.

"Peace is priceless. It is only those who have not witnessed war, that will want unrest. We have lived and seen the 1981 incident in The Gambia, so we will not allow the country to go back to that same situation."

These were the words of Kaddy Drammeh, one of the Traditional Communicators at the training.

According to Alhagie S. Nyang, National Coordinator of ACTIVISTA The Gambia,

“peace is a must and should be communicated and how we do this, matters a lot. One of the greatest agents of peace, are traditional communicators.”

At the end of the training sessions, a plan of action was developed by the participants, to guide them in conducting their own led community sensitisation activities, to disseminate the knowledge they gained from the training.



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