EVENT REPORT
25 MARCH, 2019
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The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), reimagined how the world thinks about population, development and reproductive rights, calling for access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including voluntary family planning, safe pregnancy and child-birth services for all peoples. Twenty-five years later, many more women have the power to decide whether, when and how many children to have. Preventable maternal deaths have declined by 40 per cent globally. Yet, the promises of the ICPD are not fully realised and the advances made are under threat due to persistent inequality, discrimination, political turbulence and climate change. More than ever, efforts must be multiplied to deliver sustainable development that serves every individual and realises their rights, while leaving no one behind. We must reinvigorate the revolution for a world in which everyone has rights and choices – without exceptions. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), civil society and other stakeholders supported governments to help drive the ICPD and all efforts are aimed at fulfilling the promises of the ICPD Programme of Action. Together we helped birth a revolution because we believe in transformation, but that revolution is not over and much work remains to be done. The ICPD Framework of Actions is organised around five pillars of development: Dignity and Human Rights, Health, Mobility and Place, Governance and Accountability, and Sustainability. The 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development coupled with the 50th anniversary of UNFPA, call for galvanised efforts to take stock of the progress made so far and the gaps that remain to accelerate the ICPD Programme of Action. Thus, UNFPA The Gambia leveraged the 3rd Pan-African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development to engage young African leaders on the ICPD+25 agenda. The 3rd Pan African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development themed - THE FUTURE IS NOW, YOUTH ARE NOT TOO YOUNG TO LEAD was co-hosted by the African Youth Commission (AVC) and the National Youth Council (NYC) of The Gambia, under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of The Gambia. The three-day conference brought together 350 delegates from over 40 African countries and the Diaspora, into a youth-led open space for young people to engage, in partnership with AfRYAN The Gambia. The twitter chat featured UNFPA’s West and Central Africa Regional Director, Mr. Mabingue Ngom, the Chair of the global SheDecides movement, Ms. Tihkala Itayo, a representative from the African Youth Commission, Ms. Christine Sayo, the founder of Young Beninese Leaders Association, Ms. Jeannie Bews and was moderated by the President of AfRYAN The Gambia, Mr. Andrew Gibba. The overall twitter engagements were led by, and focused on young people.

The sessions were preceded by an interactive twitter discussion on the 22nd of March, organised in partnership with AfRYAN The Gambia. The twitter chat featured UNFPA’s West and Central Africa Regional Director, Mr. Mabingue Ngom, the Chair of the global SheDecides movement, Ms. Tihkala Itayo, a representative from the African Youth Commission, Ms. Christine Sayo, the founder of Young Beninese Leaders Association, Ms. Jeannie Bews and was moderated by the President of AfRYAN The Gambia, Mr. Andrew Gibba. The overall twitter engagements of the hashtag #ICPD25Gambia reached over half a million accounts. To support the information dissemination of the IEC materials during the conference, UNFPA Gambia designed an Artificial Intelligence application for delegates.

Aimed at raising awareness on ICPD, popularize the ICPD pillars and Programme of Action as well as build momentum around the planned UNFPA Gambia events during the 3rd Pan African Youth Conference, the twitter chat brought to the forefront key issues specific to the continent, but also created an opportunity for youth to be heard and join their efforts to help accelerate the successful achievement of the ICPD agenda.
OPENING CEREMONY

The ICPD sessions commenced with an opening headlined by the Vice President of The Gambia, Dr. Isatou Touray. Other participants included Dr. Desta Alamere, Country Representative of WHO and UN Resident Coordinator ad interim in The Gambia, Dr. Tiruneh reflected on the significant progress made in the continent to safeguard the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women. He emphasized The Gambia’s progress in the decline of maternal deaths thanks to improved health services. He noted, that the childbearing age in the country has increased significantly which can be attributed to a higher enrolment of girls in the education system. He urged young people to take up roles and “responsibility to promote gender equity and hold their leaders accountable for ending inequalities.”

Dr. Tiruneh reiterated the commitment of the UN System in supporting national efforts towards achieving the targets of the ICPD Programme of Action in The Gambia. “We will also continue to support youth empowerment initiatives in the provision of education, health and skills responsive to national development needs,” he added. Dr. Tiruneh concluded his remarks by congratulating UNFPA The Gambia for organizing the ICPD sessions and wished the agency a happy 50th anniversary.

The Vice President of The Gambia, Her Excellency Dr. Isatou Touray delivered the keynote address. She reiterated the ICPD overarching principle that “population is not about numbers but about people. She emphasized that, as we reflect on how to deliver on the unfinished business, it is also important to highlight the key successes and milestones aligned to the ICPD Programme of Action. The Vice President reflected on the current situation that today, unlike 25 years ago, people are living longer and healthier lives, the equality gap between men and women is closing and more individuals are able to exercise their reproductive rights. She added that increasingly, young people are recognised as catalysts for development and thus should be considered as partners and not only beneficiaries of the transformation.

H.E. Dr. Touray highlighted some of the key challenges and priorities to be addressed by every country in Africa, such as the increasing inequalities, climate change, harmful practices and the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Highlighting the opportune timing of such a gathering, she stated that “this convergence is an opportunity for us to revisit the agreements reached in Cairo and adjust them to our current circumstances and needs.” H.E reaffirmed her Government’s commitment “to the Principles, charters and protocols that seek to advance the population and development agenda, particularly the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights and enhancing the decision-making powers of women and youth at all levels.”
SESSION ONE:
WHAT HAS CHANGED?
ACCELERATING THE PROMISE FROM CAIRO

This first ICPD+25 focused plenary had speakers from different countries and sectors to deliberate on the continent’s achievements since Cairo and provided key recommendations going forward. The panelists also made personal commitments to multiply their efforts within their areas of expertise to accelerate actions towards ensuring rights and choices for all as part of the realization of the sustainable development goals.
Mr Kunle Adeniyi provided a comprehensive overview of the ICPD convergence in 1994, the Programme of Action and its five pillars. He elaborated on UNFPA’s alignment to the ICPD PoA since the setting up of the UNFPA Country Office 45 years ago. Mr Adeniyi highlighted the progress made over the years in reducing preventable maternal deaths, increasing access to health care services and increasing the number of girls’ enrolment in school. He congratulated the Government of The Gambia for creating an enabling environment for enhanced human and social development indicators for women and girls in particular by criminalising harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. He added that, UNFPA has been given the mandate by the UN agencies to champion the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action at all levels and reaffirmed the agency’s continued commitment to supporting efforts by various stakeholders, especially youth-led initiatives. Mr. Adeniyi opined that “the energy of the youth will advance this agenda because even though progress has been registered on various issues, we are yet to reach the desired targets.” He concluded by urging all stakeholders to invest in building the capacity of young people to be able to engage meaningfully.

Mr. Henry Tumani, the Director of the National Population Commission Secretariat of The Gambia, gave a very detailed historical perspective on how population and development matters have evolved in other parts of the world. He reiterated that key achievements in The Gambia include an improved health sector, introduction of comprehensive sexuality education in schools and poverty reduction.
Ms. Edith Asamani, from Knitweb Foundation in Ghana, explained how ICPD outcomes have affected her life and her work as a sexual and reproductive health and rights activist. She noted that young people in Africa are ready and willing to take up their social responsibility and drive social change in their communities but are often restricted because of limited opportunities. This tied into the remarks made by the succeeding speaker, Dr. Issa Nsia-Adams, Convener of the African CSO Coalition on Population and Development (ACCPD). He questioned how far the civil society in Africa has challenged African Governments to advance the ICPD Programme of Action, noting that Africa is home to the highest prevalence of human rights issues. He concluded by stating that “if you are doing something now, increase your efforts. If you are not doing anything, start now. We cannot wait for another 25 years.”

Ms. Asamani further explained that the Republic of Congo and President of AfriYAN ESA shared some best practices of youth organizations engaged in SRHR, CSE and community mobilization at country level. She cited strong youth movements in ORI, including AfriYAN Tanzania and Uganda that have been engaged in impactful work around the human rights and dignity of women and marginalized people.

To conclude the session, the moderator requested that each panelist use one word to best describe the primary focus of ICPD+25. The panelists came up with the following:

**WOMEN, YOUTH, INCLUSION, and RESPONSIBILITY.**
SESSION TWO:

ICPD CAFÉ: THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The second session was styled as a TV show and focused on the 'unfinished business.'

This session served a call to action for young people to contribute to delivering the Pan African sustainable development and transformation agenda aligned to the ICPD. Good governance and accountability, the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa’s Agenda 2063 are pivotal to achieving the ICPD Programme of Action. It is befitting that young people play an active role in holding leaders, Governments, and stakeholders accountable for ensuring enabling governance and promoting progress and development. The session presented case studies of where youth leadership was instrumental role in uplifting the ideals of good governance and fostering a culture of citizen led accountability to deliver on human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.
Ms. Bina Maseno, a former politician in Kenya, ran for office at only 23 years of age because she wanted to close the gap in youth and women’s representation in the country’s National Assembly. In her intervention, she urged youth not to fear being consumed by the limitations such as constrained finances to run for political office.

Mr. Sali Matty Jaw is a researcher and political science lecturer at the University of The Gambia, who has previously been detained for conducting surveys on public opinion of the Government of the last regime. He emphasized that young people should invest in the social capital that is networks across the continent that can support their work. He also called for meaningful youth engagement stating that “anything for the youth, without the youth is not for the youth.”

Ms. Marlama Jammeh who is the Programme Assistant for Peace Education, Democracy and Governance at WANEAP urged leaders to be ready and willing to listen to and engage with young people meaningfully and not in a tokenistic manner as it is often the norm. For their part, Lamin Ceesay and Christine Kine Sarr committed to multiplying their efforts to raise their voices for their constituents and work with other partners at the country level to amplify efforts towards ensuring dignity and human rights for all. Lamin thanked UNFPA The Gambia for their continued support of the work and capacity enhancement of the National Youth Council.

To conclude the session, Mabedi Motimedi, a software engineer, gave a presentation on the value addition of technology in accelerating the delivery of the ICPD PoA. He provided examples on how technology innovations, open data, blockchain technology and artificial intelligence mechanisms can be leveraged to fill in the gaps in programming for population and development such as enhancing the availability of accurate and disaggregated data, increasing access to services, enhanced information dissemination and support more evidence-based programming among other benefits.

Mabedi underscored that “the world is in the 4th Industrial Revolution and Africa should not be left behind. The next breakthrough in technology innovation must come from this continent.”
SESSION THREE:

ICPD TALKS
BOLD, YOUNG
AND WINNING

The last session was officially opened by the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of The Gambia, Mr Lamin Camara on behalf of the Honourable Minister. He recognised that, young people in Africa face a lot of challenges in their quest to live more fulfilling lives and realising their full potential. He however commended the resilience of youth in Africa, asserting that “our young people keep breaking the glass ceilings, being the change they want to see and making great strides to deliver transformation for themselves, their families and communities.” Mr Camara reaffirmed the Government of The Gambia’s commitment to the wellbeing and welfare of young people through supporting entrepreneurship and effective engagement in national development, as espoused in the current National Development Plan (2018 – 2021) strategic priorities. He concluded his remarks by commending UNFPA for continuously epitomising and supporting youth-led and driven initiatives and joined other speakers in wishing UNFPA a happy 50th anniversary.
Chaired by the Honorable Minister of Youth and Sports of The Gambia, Honorable Hadramah Sidibeh, the ICFP Talks provided a platform for young changemakers in Africa to tell their stories. The Minister recognized that, young people in Africa face a lot of challenges in their quest to live more fulfilling lives and realizing their full potential. He however commended the resilience of youth in Africa, asserting that “our young people keep breaking the glass ceiling, being the change they want to see and making great strides to deliver transformation for themselves, their families and communities.” Hon. Sidibeh reaffirmed the Government of The Gambia’s commitment to the well-being and welfare of young people through supportive entrepreneurship and effective engagement in national development, as espoused in the current National Development Plan (2018 – 2021).

Strategic priorities. He concluded his remarks by commending UNFPA for continuously epitomizing and supporting youth-led and driven initiatives and joined other speakers in wishing UNFPA a happy 50th anniversary.

Dubbied, “Young, Bold and Winning,” the ICFP-25 Talks plenary featured young people who took it upon their social responsibility to challenge the status quo and embark on advocacy efforts and initiatives that are contributing to the upliftment of young people in Africa. The presenters were Ms. Jaha Dukureh from The Gambia, End FGM Campaigner, Founder of Safe Hands for Girls and UN Women Goodwill Ambassador for Africa, Mr. Gossy Ukanwoke from Nigeria, a successful Social Entrepreneur using technology to provide Nigerian Youth with an opportunity to attain University education and finally, Ms. Bina Maseno from Kenya, a politician, social justice activist and founder of Badili Africa. The inspirational work by the youth leaders epitomizes the kind of African youth Leadership we aspire to see leading our transformative agenda. They have saved lives, improved livelihoods, influenced changing legislation, compromised their lives in their pursuit of social justice and have gone boldly and fearlessly in the direction of their dreams. Their initiatives have made significant positive changes on the lives of young people in their respective countries and the African Continent.

It has been established that the ICPD Programme of Action is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, universal sexual and reproductive health and rights being central to much of these agendas. By enabling the youth to formulate pressing demands on sustainable development in Africa, the conference reaffirmed the need for more youth participation in ICPD engagements on a bigger scale and the creation of platforms where young people’s voices count. The Nairobi Summit on ICPD+25: taking place in November, is an opportune time to galvanize young people’s interest and participation in sustained efforts to realize reproductive health and rights and seek additional commitments from governments, organizations, advocates and others, to realize the promise of ICPD. While the conference will offer an inclusive podium for youth networks to discuss and agree on actions to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, The Gambia Country Office will continue to be an enabler and continue promoting youth’s participation and leadership on issues that will define the future of the next generations. Recommendations are as follows:

DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

It is recommended that advocacy efforts are multiplied in advocating for inclusive and equitable approaches that factor interventions for addressing dignity and human rights of people in fragile and humanitarian settings, especially women and children.

Advocate for gender responsive policies, interventions and budgeting at the national level.

Develop interventions that will support the establishment of community-based and focused early warning and early response systems by working with local people, including the youths to prevent conflict.

African youth emphasized the need for the creation of sufficient decent jobs through multi stakeholder partnerships, to achieve empowerment and promote equitable improved livelihoods.

Promote ensuring that the education curriculum in African countries complement the aspire ideals in health, climate change, peace and security as well as gender equality. Strengthen law enforcement to safeguard human dignity and human rights for all at the country level.
GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- Strengthen the capacities of youth-led organizations for political and social participation, as catalysts of positive change and strengthen their groups and structures to promote peace and moral tolerance.
- Create platforms for intergenerational mentorship in leadership.
- Build financial and technical capacities of youth-led organizations and networks working on population and development in Africa. This can also be through investing in movement building to foster citizen-led accountability for delivering human rights, including reproductive rights.
- Build more political momentum and motivate political and technocratic will and commitment to deliver MSDPs. Align CPD targets to National Development Plans to increase implementation opportunities.
- Safeguard the inclusion of youth and women to participate in decision making and early warning processes at community and regional level that promote peace building.
- Support young people to engage in legislation and nation building dialogues using community structures such as the Village Development Committees (VDC) and Ward Development Committees (WDC), etc.

Youth centres should be used as centres of excellence for promoting peace building. The centres can use socially inclusive and uniting activities such as football, art and festivals to teach the community and particularly young people about the importance of Pan-African solidarity and other ideals.

PLACE AND MOBILITY
- The peace and security - development nexus is critical in tackling the root causes of forced displacement since conflict is among the key push factors of forced displacement as well as climate change. Displacement is among the major challenges in the region.
- Promote safeguarding the dignity and human rights in global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- Address the in-country governance deficits that result in high prevalence of migration.

HEALTH
- Address the need for evidence that reaches beyond the health sector and into a more holistic life course focus/approach.
- Increase women’s access to life saving information and services as well as addressing the social norms that continue to impede women’s ability to make decisions over their lives and bodies.
- Invest in increasing access to comprehensive sexuality education to enable adolescents access to information that will help them make better informed choices about their lives.
- Use youth centres as safe spaces where young people can access information and youth friendly services (YFS) on their sexual and reproductive health.
- Use women’s shelters as safe spaces to host survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) as well as ensuring access to information, services and referral systems in partnership with law enforcement offices.
- Promote the enforcement of legislation banning harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriages.
- Engage community leaders such as traditional and religious leaders in promoting keeping girls in school.

SUSTAINABILITY
- Develop mechanisms to harness domestic resource mobilization for development work and reduce the over reliance of African countries on foreign aid. E.g. leveraging on private sector partnerships and philanthropy.
- Promote the improvement of the quality, accuracy and reliability of data collection as well as dissemination.
- Invest in youth-led innovation and social entrepreneurship to address social challenges, including rampant unemployment and underemployment.
- Develop a value proposition and motivate investment towards technology driven innovations that can accelerate progress in realizing the CPD targets at all levels.
- It is important to draw the nexus between human population and the planet and ensure that climate change is reflected as a cross cutting issue in all the pillars of the CPD.
- More environmental awareness should be taught through trendy multimedia campaigns that encourage everybody to be eco-friendly.
- Countries contributing the most to environmental impacts should be help accountable by global actors to reform urgently as the impact acutely affects the poor and marginalized who have limited resources to adapt while they have contributed the least.
- Develop and disseminate child friendly tools that empower children to understand and analyze transitional justice/reconciliation processes, constitutional reviews, peace building and human rights.
ANNEX ONE: DIGITAL ANALYTICS

ICPD25 Gambia BOT user retention averaged at 50%

The hashtag had 39 posts on Instagram and Facebook engagement reached 6956 accounts. All the sessions were live streamed on Facebook. On social media, our official hashtag #ICPD25Gambia generated over 1500 tweets, reached 510 959 accounts and had 6 653 681 impressions, from 3 x 1 hour sessions. Our livestream on Facebook had more than 400 viewers. The sessions received press coverage from local media houses GRTS and QTV.
ANNEX TWO: PHOTO GALLERY

The Report is compatible with Argumented Reality. Follow ‘UNFPATheGambia’ on HP Reveal and scan the cover photo to access it. Video highlights of session are also available on our Youtube channel - UNFPA THE GAMBIA.

Jaha Dukureh sharing her story on surviving FGM & child marriage and how she now uses her voices to help more girls to not face the same predicament.

Gossy Ukanwoke inspiring the audience on how he became a millionaire through his education social enterprise.

Plenary moderator Gogontlejang Phaladi(center) catching up with speakers (L-R) Lorence Kabasele, Dr Uwemedimo Eset & Bina Maseno.