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ACRONYMS

ANC  Antenatal Care
AYSRH  Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health
BEmONC  Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care
CBD  Community Based Distributors
CEmONC  Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care
CP  Country Programme
CPR  Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
CSE  Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSP  Clinical Service Providers
EFSTH  Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital
FP  Family Planning
FGM  Female Genital Mutilation
GBoS  Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GFPA  Gambia Family Planning Association
GoTG  Government of The Gambia
ICPD  International Conference on Population and Development
MDR  Maternal Death Audit Reviews
MICS  Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR  Maternal Mortality Rate
MoHSW  Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
NDP  National Development Plan
NSDS  National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NYC  National Youth Council
PHC  Primary Health Care
PNC  Postnatal Care
PSB  Procurement Service Branch
SDG  Sustainable Development Goal
SRH  Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSTC  South-South & Triangular Cooperation
TFR  Total Fertility Rate
UHC  Universal Health Coverage
UN  United Nations
UNDAF  United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNFPA  United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF  United Nations Children’s Fund
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Kunle Adeniyi

EDITORS
Alieu Sarr
Mbasureh Saidybah

EDITORIAL/PRODUCTION TEAM
Haddy Jonga
Maimuna Denton
Isatou Jallow

CONTRIBUTORS
Maimuna Denton
Alieu Jammeh
Alhagie Kolley
Lamin Camara

PHOTOGRAPHY
@UNFPATheGambia/IJallow

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In 2019, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) celebrated two major milestones; 50 years since UNFPA began operations and the 25th anniversary of the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

The Country Office contributed to the global commemoration by leveraging the 3rd Pan-African Youth Conference on African Unity and Development, organized by the African Youth Commission in partnership with the Gambia National Youth Council (NYC). The conference brought together about 350 young leaders from 40 African countries to discuss pertinent issues on the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) and its implementation in Africa.

As part of the Road to Nairobi initiatives, the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem visited the country from 8 to 11 August 2019 to mobilize government’s support and commitment towards realizing the ideals of the ICPD agenda. During the visit, she engaged His Excellency President Adama Barrow, the National Population Commission, young people and other stakeholders, to support the country to make valuable commitments at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 in November, 2019.

In the same year, the Country Office commenced implementation of two projects supported by the UN Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund. The projects aim to increase the participation of women and youth in decision making and as agents of community conflict prevention and strengthen sustainable and holistic reintegration of returnees in the Gambia.

Young people remain at the heart of our work, as such UNFPA supported the launch of the Gambia Programme of Action on Youth - the first of its kind. The blueprint will guide holistic interventions towards the realization of the maximum potential of Gambian youth.

As part of efforts to reach the last mile with sexual and reproductive health information and services, the Country Office supported the procurement of contraceptive commodities worth 1 million dollars and upgraded 10 health facilities to deliver Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (BEmONC) services.

Clearly, 2019 was the year of strengthened partnerships and renewed commitments for the empowerment of women, adolescents and young people.

I must express my profound appreciation to the government of The Gambia, our numerous partners and the people of this beautiful country for the support and enabling environment to carry out our life-saving work.

Finally, I thank all my colleagues at the UNFPA Gambia Country Office who worked tirelessly in 2019 and always for the achievement of our 3 transformative results:

- **Ending unmet need for Family Planning**
- **Ending preventable maternal death**
- **Ending Gender Based Violence and harmful practices**

We hope that this report gives you a depth of insight into our year and achievements. Happy reading!

Kunle Adeniyi
UNFPA Country Representative
ENDIGN PREVENTABLE MATERNAL DEATHS

Recognizing that quality care during pregnancies, labor, childbirth, and postpartum can significantly reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality in The Gambia, the Country Office in 2019 procured lifesaving maternal medicines including oxytocin which helps in starting labour, oxygen concentrators which facilitate easy breathing for distressed women during delivery and anesthetic machines which are instrumental during caesarian sections, among others, thus contributing to a reduction in maternal deaths in the country. The Country Office also made considerable investments in upgrading health facilities to provide CEmONC and BEmONC services.

RESULTS

113 MATERNAL DEATHS AVERTED

10 HEALTH FACILITIES UPGRADED AND STRENGTHENED TO PROVIDE BEmONC SERVICES THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND THE PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

1 REGIONAL HOSPITAL UPGRADED TO PROVIDE CEmONC SERVICES

20 PERCENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES STRENGTHENED TO OFFER CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING SERVICES

MATERNAL DEATH AUDIT REVIEW MEETINGS CONDUCTED IN ALL MAJOR HEALTH FACILITIES AND HOSPITALS

12 FISTULA REPAIR SURGERIES CONDUCTED
ENDI NG FISTULA IN THE GAMBIA: 
A STORY OF SURVIVAL, RESTORED 
DIGNITY AND HOPE

Surviving a 90-day journey of healing, excitement for a possible transformation of their lives, hope for restored dignity and fear of a failed surgery, was the story of the women who underwent fistula repair surgeries organized by the Bafrow Medical Centre, with support from UNFPA The Gambia.

Secluded from community life, living through constant loneliness and the pain of being unable to afford treatment for their condition for many years; these women have fought the hard fight of living with a condition often regarded as ‘embarrassing’ and ‘unmanageable’. They lived through the struggle of an injury they never saw coming and one they were often blamed for, but they have made it to the other side where they once were – happy, full of life, active and recognized as valuable members of their communities.

On our first visit to the Bafrow Fistula Rehabilitation Centre in Mandinaba, approximately 19 kilometers from The Gambia’s capital city, Banjul, we had an opportunity to interact with the patients who were being prepared for theater. In our conversations, they were positive that the surgeries will be successful because of the quality of care and the level of their interaction with the staff. Although aware that not all fistula surgeries come out successful and that they would have to wait for 3 months (90 days) to find out their fate, the women expressed delight in the opportunity to have a second chance at getting back their health and dignity. This alone for them, was enough reason to be happy and positive.

Their worries were numerous before they got registered to undergo surgery. Their fears were evident and their hope to survive was very minimal.
“I really thought I would never be cured. So I was always indoors.”

“I have seen many women like myself die as a result of this condition in my village. I always thought I was going to end up like them – dead.”

These were the words of two of the women we spoke to after final confirmation of their successful surgeries.

For us at UNFPA, these very difficult traumatic experiences of women living with Obstetric Fistula in The Gambia, are the reasons we continue to invest in strengthening The Gambia’s health system and working towards ending all preventable maternal deaths in the country. Reaffirming this commitment, the Country Office as part of its 2017 – 2021 Country Programme, intends to support at least 150 fistula repair surgeries in The Gambia.

Working with Bafrow and the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, UNFPA The Gambia has now supported 31 repair surgeries. However, it must be emphasised that, our target is not just to provide surgeries, but to accompany these women through their journey of healing. For us, this means restoring their hopes in life, equipping them with skills to help them earn a living to be economically independent, and reintegrating them into their communities.

Obstetric Fistula is a childbirth injury caused by prolonged, obstructed labour without timely intervention, typically, a Caesarean section, that is often underdiagnosed in The Gambia.

UNFPA is committed to working towards ensuring that all women in The Gambia live happy, dignified and Fistula-free lives. This is the journey we are on and we will leave nobody behind!
ENDNG UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

In 2019, the Country Office’s efforts and investments were targeted at improving the knowledge and skills of Health Service Providers in the area of counselling, provision of Family Planning (FP) services and post-abortion management. A significant proportion of the Gambian population living in remote rural areas are disadvantaged in terms of access to FP services and the level of knowledge about family planning. Efforts to achieve equal access to modern contraceptives, in particular reaching the last mile, were initiated in the country with a view to promoting contraceptive use specifically targeting hard-to-reach and deprived communities. This warranted the expansion and strengthening of the support to the Community-Based Distributor (CBD) programme with the aim of bringing services closer to under-served communities.

RESULTS

- **24,418** UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES AVERTED
- **121,907** CLIENTS REACHED THROUGH THE COMMUNITY-BASED DISTRIBUTION OF CONTRACEPTIVES
- **119,942** COUPLE YEARS OF PROTECTION GENERATED
- NEW ACCEPTORS UNDER THE CBD PROGRAMME INCREASED BY 9.2%, FROM **6,523** IN 2018 TO **7,126** IN 2019
- **81,967** CURRENT FAMILY PLANNING USERS REGISTERED
- NEW FP ACCEPTORS INCREASED BY 29.8% FROM 2018 TO 2019. I.E. FROM **62,143** TO **80,909**
- THE NUMBER OF WOMEN USING FP INJECTABLE INCREASED BY 5.1%, FROM **69,787** IN 2018 TO **73,369** IN 2019
Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health services for all including those furthest behind is at the heart of UNFPA’s work. This is why the agency continues to partner with institutions and organisations working on this area in the country including the Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA). Over the years, UNFPA has supported the GFPA in delivering Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) services including Family Planning, through the provision of contraceptive commodities and supporting the training of Community Based Distributors in order to ensure that we reach the last mile.

These interventions however, are more effective when young people have a point of contact to access these services and information, in a friendly and judgement free environment.

Meet Kassamanding Touray, the Youth Program Officer at The Gambia Family Association, whose job is rooted in discussing sexual and reproductive health matters with young people. She believes that “when young people have full understanding of their sexual reproductive health, they are empowered for life”.

Kassamanding joined the Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) when she was in grade 12 which was the same year the GFPA piloted its Youth Centre. The youth centre is a safe space for young people to access information and services that are vital to their sexual and reproductive health. When asked about her work and the challenges that it comes with, she noted “it can be difficult to have young people openly discuss sexual & reproductive health issues. This is because in some cases when they do, they are discriminated against and labelled. This is why this space is important to the well-being of young people. We take care of their needs with zero discrimination or judgement.”

Her daily routine involves talking to young people about their sexual & reproductive health both at work and at home. “I discuss sexual and reproductive health everywhere and with everyone because it is fulfilling to me knowing that I am educating young people. My greatest motivation stems from the number of young people I help on a daily basis, the number of young people that walk into my space to discuss issues that affect them greatly” she told our team.

For a lot of young people, all they ever heard growing up was “this is a taboo and you should not be talking or hearing about it”. This condemnation also came in other forms including gestures or just short responses from adults that reeked emphasis on why you should not be discussing this. This is even more serious for adolescent girls as a result of gender norms and cultural beliefs.

According to Kassamanding, when she initially started her job, she was discriminated against and people shared their dismay and said she was leading young people astray but she remains steadfast and stands by her mantra “young people should be open to talk about sex and sexuality. This is freedom.”

Beyond her work space, Kassamanding provides information and services to young people in her neighbourhood as well. “The young people in my neighbourhood come to my house for services and help. When I am not around, my husband provides this to them because I have educated him on my work and he fully understands what it means and how it relates to human wellbeing.

Kassamanding just like the other staff and volunteers at the GFPA facility are able to continue the work they do based on UNFPA’s strengthened collaboration with the organisation. In 2019, UNFPA supported the provision of comprehensive Adolescent Clinic Based Services at the GFPA facility, free anonymous HIV testing services for 1000 clients, increased the capacity of 50 Community Based Distributors on Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services and supported a regional Adolescents and Youth Forum on SRH/HIV and Family Planning which brought together 60 participants.

UNFPA continues to support GFPA in providing access to SRH services guided by the agency’s transformative goal to end unmet need for family planning, a vision of promoting the enjoyment of quality SRH rights for all men, women and young people, contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS through advocacy, counseling, behavioral change in communication and provision of health care services for couples, individuals and under-served communities.
CHAPTER ONE: PROGRAMME REPORT

ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

As a result of deep seated social and cultural norms, gender-based violence (GBV) including harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Marriage continue to hinder the growth and development of girls and women in The Gambia.

In order to help address some of these harmful practices and ensure women and girls live violence-free lives and are given the right opportunities to thrive, the Country Office in 2019 supported capacity building and awareness raising activities aimed at ensuring religious leaders who are community gatekeepers, have a deep understanding of gender-based violence and recognize the need to join the fight towards the elimination of all harmful practices.

Additionally, with the establishment of the new Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare, there was a need to ensure proper structuring of the Ministry so as to make certain that the Ministry is able to adequately cater to the needs of women and girls. As such, UNFPA hired a consultant to support the structuring and strengthening of the Ministry.

RESULTS

1. 140 RELIGIOUS LEADERS SENSITIZED ON FGM

2. 60 POLICE OFFICERS INCLUDING CHARGED OFFICERS TRAINED ON GBV USING THE REVISED POLICE TRAINING MANUAL

3. 710 STUDENTS TRAINED ON FGM, GBV AND CHILD MARRIAGE
INTRODUCING #MÉBÉT THE MOVIE:
INSpiring a generation to take action
AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

Every girl’s dream of a successful life is one in which they are happy and are able to live out their aspirations. This however, is not the case for most of the 650 million girls and women alive today who were married off before their 18th birthday. These and the 12 million girls that are married off every year, watch the world stifle their dreams and cage them in a lifelong misery.

Each day, we are reminded of the 1 in 3 girls that have been married off in The Gambia before they turned 18. This grave human rights violation has cost the lives of over a million girls around the globe. Some are left with no education, leaving them dependent on others and stuck in realities they never envisioned for themselves.

In 2019, UNFPA supported RebelVZN to screen their debut film dubbed #MÉBÉT in 5 Upper Basic schools in the Greater Banjul Area, namely Latrikunda Upper Basic School, St. John’s School for The Deaf, Charles Jow Memorial Academy, St. Theresa’s Upper Basic School and Khaddijatou’s Centre of Excellence, targeting 100 students in each school with boys and girls inclusive. #MÉBÉT is a film that explores child marriage in a typical Gambian community, giving an insight into the journey of a girl who is forced to marry an elderly man as a result of poverty and her parents’ desire to uphold longstanding traditions, which unfortunately brought her life to an abrupt end.

Following the screening of the 33-minute film in each of the schools, conversations were facilitated to steer up engagements with the students, in order to get their perspectives and listen to their opinions regarding child marriage as a phenomenon in The Gambia.

When the students were asked about the causes of child marriage, what they think about it and how they pledge to end it in their communities, Anna, a student from St. Theresa’s shared that, “poverty encourages some parents to marry off their children. When parents are poor and find it difficult to make ends meet every day, if a rich man asks for their daughter’s hand in marriage, the chances are high that they will accept this offer, in order to deliver themselves from their ordeal.”

Fatoumatta Bah, a student of Charles Jow Memorial Academy, in her contribution, reminded her peers and everyone present at the screening saying that, “we cannot talk about Child Marriage without talking about Female Genital Mutilation. The fight to end these ordeals and dawn a new day for women and girls in The Gambia and beyond, must run simultaneously because they are both harmful practices.”

Interestingly, the boys also had strong opinions about the practices, with Muhammed Bah, a student of Charles Jow Memorial Academy mentioning that, “Child Marriage is bad and our generation has a unique opportunity to end it. I have taken up the commitment and we can all change the narratives.”

Each #MÉBÉT screening left us hopeful for what the future holds for women and girls and how their male counterparts are making conscious efforts to support the progress towards realizing a world free from all forms of violence.
INVESTING IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTH AND WOMEN

Conflicts are often the result of systemic discrimination, social exclusion and a lack of appropriate communication channels through which individuals can make their grievances known. As The Gambia frees itself from years of iron-fist rule and dictatorship, the effects of the 22 years of economic hardship have been severe on the health and wellbeing of women and children. UNFPA The Gambia, focused on the health and wellbeing of adolescents and youth, secured funding up to a tune of $1.2 million under the UN Secretary General’s Peacebuilding Fund in 2019, to implement two distinct projects aimed at advancing the wellbeing of women and youth through peacebuilding.

The first project focuses on empowering youth and women groups to participate in decision making processes across the different tiers of government, and engage with political leaders to promote and support women and youth in decision making, early warning and peace building processes.

Gambia’s transition to a new democratic government, coincided with significant levels of migrants returning to the country, thus, for the sustainability of peace and stability, it is crucial to have appropriate measures to successfully re integrate young Gambian migrants, who have, in their majority, suffered abuse and face stigma in reintegrating into the larger society. In this unique window of opportunity, The Gambia needs to provide opportunities for meaningful inclusion of returning migrants.

As such, the second project which is aimed at strengthening sustainable and holistic reintegrations of returnee migrants in The Gambia, seeks to strengthen foundations for peace by fostering positive economic and social interdependencies between returnees and host communities by facilitating sustainable reintegration that will contribute to enhanced social cohesion and inclusion.

WOMEN AND YOUTH PROJECT RESULTS:

1,565 YOUTH MOBILIZED AND SENSITIZED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

105 YOUTH ENGAGED IN A MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME WITH VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES/WARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES IN TARGET REGIONS

111 WOMEN TRAINED AND PARTICIPATING IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

30 WIPNETS AND MOTHER’S CLUBS ESTABLISHED AND PROMOTING PEACE IN TARGET REGIONS

755 LOCAL LEADERS MOBILIZED AND SENSITIZED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING
RETURNEE MIGRANTS PROJECT RESULTS

2,780 YOUTH ENGAGED IN DIALOGUE FORA IN TARGET COMMUNITIES

24 COMMUNITY YOUTH CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES SUCCESSFULLY ORGANIZED

180 TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATORS TRAINED AND A TOTAL OF 1,200 COMMUNITY MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION ACTIVITIES

700 AT-RISK YOUTH INCLUDING RETURNEES, WERE TRAINED ON LIFE-SKILLS, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND LEADERSHIP

3,300 YOUTH ENGAGED THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AIMED AT ENABLING SHARED LEARNING AND INCLUSIVENESS
The Gambia began preparations for its second Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in December 2018. The overall goal of the DHS is to provide updates to critical national demographic and health indicators to inform planning, policy and programme development. Since the Government alone could not meet the entire cost of the survey, UNFPA was approached to lead resource mobilization efforts targeting UN Agencies and the donor community. UNFPA in collaboration with the government of The Gambia mobilized about $1.5 million, towards the funding of the DHS.

The conduct of the DHS is quite timely as it will provide much needed updates to a number of indicators to help the country revise some of the National Development Plan (2018-2021) indicators and also inform policy and programme formulation in general. It is anticipated that indicators to be generated from the survey will be quite useful in the evaluation of the current UNFPA Country Programme (2017-2021) and will also inform the development of the next programme cycle (2022-2026).

Meanwhile the Country Office is supporting the Bureau of Statistics to prepare for the 2023 Population and Housing Census. A comprehensive budgeted census project document would be prepared in the course of 2020 and other preparatory activities will begin in earnest.
Recognizing that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) enables young people to protect their health, well-being and dignity and noting that CSE programmes advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of young people based on human rights principles, UNFPA works with the Government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) to implement a CSE programme in schools, and through community-based approaches and outreaches.

To support this, the Country Office in 2019 centered investments in building the capacity of teachers to effectively deliver CSE lessons in schools and in ensuring that a standard curriculum is developed and implemented. As a result, 610 teachers were trained on Comprehensive Sexuality Education and a school-based Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum was developed during the year.
CHAPTER TWO: PROGRAMME ENABLERS

PROVISION OF ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND SERVICES

In order to ensure that adolescents smoothly transition to adulthood and are equipped with the right information and opportunities to make informed choices, we at UNFPA believe that providing adolescents and young people with sexual and reproductive health information and services is key to empowering them to live healthy and dignified lives. Consequently, one of the enablers of our programme in The Gambia is investing in the provision of Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) information and services. In 2019, the Country Office strengthened and supported facilities and safe spaces (youth centres) where adolescents and youth can access information and services, in an environment that is friendly and free of judgement.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

It is evident that during emergencies and humanitarian situations and contexts, women and girls are some of the most vulnerable groups. Millions of women and adolescent girls around the world, as a result of the humanitarian crisis, are faced with barriers to accessing family planning information and care, menstrual hygiene supplies, maternal health care, among many other challenges. Premised on this understanding, UNFPA The Gambia in response to floods in the Central River Region of The Gambia in June 2019, supported communities through the provision of 1,200 dignity kits and essential supplies for women and girls.
CHAPTER 3

MARKING ICPD+25 AND UNFPA@50 IN THE GAMBIA
AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICES AND RECOGNIZING THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

The 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, coupled with the 50th anniversary of UNFPA, called for galvanized efforts to take stock of the progress we have made so far and the gaps that remain in our drive to accelerate the Programme of Action.

To begin the commemoration of these important milestones, UNFPA The Gambia through the 3rd Pan-African Youth Summit on African Unity and Development, engaged about 350 young people from nearly 40 countries across the continent into a youth-led open space for young people to engage among themselves, promote Pan African ideals and develop pathways to add value towards delivering Africa’s transformative agenda, while capturing the voices and contributions of African youth, towards the achievement of the unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action.
The government of The Gambia in 2019 through the National Population Commission and with support from UNFPA The Gambia, launched the Gambia’s Five-Year Review Report on the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development Beyond 2014. The national report reviews progress and evaluates the extent to which The Gambia has fulfilled its commitments reflected in the AADPD over the past five years and assesses the country’s prospects for harnessing the demographic dividend. The report highlighted some of the key achievements the country registered in the areas of health, demographic dividend and data and statistics among others. In the area of health, progress has been registered in the revitalization of PHC and scaling up (from 634 PHC villages in 2015 to 810 in 2018) for equitable and universal access to a comprehensive range of health care services among others. However, despite the progress made, inadequate financial, human and material resources; weaknesses in the health referral system at all levels and sustainability of HIV services have slowed impact.
UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR VISITS THE GAMBIA

ED MEETS WITH GAMBIAN PRESIDENT H.E. ADAMA BARROW

On her official visit to The Gambia, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem, paid a courtesy visit to His Excellency the President of the Republic of The Gambia, Mr. Adama Barrow to discuss issues around UNFPA’s support to the government and people of The Gambia and to garner support for the Gambia’s commitment ahead of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25.

The ED also held a Youth Bantaba dubbed the Road to Nairobi Temperature Check with over 200 young people to discuss their aspirations towards the realization of the Programme of Action and their required commitment to finish the unfinished business. The UNFPA head accompanied by the Regional Director for West and Central Africa met with Country Office staff to recognize their achievements and congratulate them on the life-saving work they do.
The Executive Director was later hosted to a partnership dinner by the Vice President. Expressing her delight, The ED said, “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, 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!”
THE GAMBIA AT THE NAIROBI SUMMIT ON ICPD25: ACCELERATING THE PROMISE
The Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 brought together about 5000 participants from all across the world, to reflect and recommit to realising the aspirations of the ICPD Programme of Action. The Country was represented at the summit by a delegation headed by the Minister of Health Dr. Ahmadou Lamin Samateh, accompanied by UNFPA The Gambia. Highlights of The Gambia’s participation at the summit included a panel on Building Financing Momentum: The Investment Case for the ICPD PoA. The panelists included the Gambian Health Minister and was used to portray how The Gambia is prioritizing investments into the health sector, especially in strengthening the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services.

Similarly, the Honourable Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare was part of a panel on South-South Triangular Partnerships to Achieve the ICPD Promise. During this panel, the Honourable Minister highlighted the significant strides the government of the Gambia has registered in terms of the provision of medical services for women and girls especially in addressing the high maternal mortality rates and harmful traditional practices.

Given that the objective of the summit was to mobilise political will and financial commitments to fully implement the ICPD PoA, the Gambian Minister of Health presented the Government of The Gambia’s commitments at the meeting to advance the realisation of the aspirations of the ICPD Programme of Action.
THE GAMBIA’S NAIROBI COMMITMENTS:

i. a) Repealing all legislation that discriminates against women, girls and youth in all spheres of life including sexual and reproductive health, economic activities and education by 2030;

b) Strengthening the legal system by building capacities of judges, magistrates and law enforcement agencies to properly manage, adjudicate and enforce laws that prohibit all forms of gender-based violence as well as child marriage by 2023;

ii. Providing the human, financial and material resources for the teaching of comprehensive sexuality education in all primary and secondary schools and also implement an out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education programme by the year 2025;

iii. a) Revitalizing the Primary Health Care (PHC) system by building, reorienting and realigning the health system towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2025;

b) We commit to train and deploy 500 midwives to service delivery points by 2025;

c) We commit to strengthen all health facilities to provide Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (BEmONC) and 6 health facilities to provide quality Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (CEmONC) services by 2023;

d) We commit to increase the proportion of births attended by skilled attendants from 57% to 80% by 2022 through a rigorous community-based campaign to increase the uptake of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services;

e) We commit to the provision of basic life-saving equipment, supply services, medicines to all health facilities for maternal and new-born services by 2025;

iv. Creating and funding a budget line for Family Planning (FP) commodities and services in the national budget by 2020;

v. a) Conducting 14 Orientation meetings targeting 48 Parliamentarians, 160 Ward Councilors, 5 Area Council Chairpersons, 2 Mayors, 700 Religious and Community Leaders towards ensuring a multi-sectoral approach and involvement of various stakeholders to mainstream FP in all sectors by 2023;

b) We commit to train and commission 1750 (350 per year) Community Based Service Providers to increase the uptake and access to Family Planning and Sexual and Reproductive Health services to all who need it including displaced persons, adolescents, sexually active unmarried couples, out of school youths, commercial sex workers and other vulnerable groups (disable and mentally ill persons) by 2025;
THE GAMBIA’S NAIROBI COMMITMENTS:

c) We commit to train 500 (100 per year) Clinical Service Providers (CSP) to provide long term contraceptive methods in all levels of the health care delivery system by 2024;

d) We commit to attain uninterrupted supply of contraceptives at all levels of service delivery by reducing proportion of facilities with no Family Planning commodity stock out from 17% to 0% by 2021;

e) We commit to support operational research on the introduction of new contraceptive methods applicable for use;

f) We commit to strengthen advocacy, communication and behavioral change to increase uptake of FP/SRH services in all the regions by end 2024 targeting men;

vi. We commit to developing a resource mobilization plan for the National Population Programme by 2023 with the goal of mobilizing resources locally, through multilateral and bi-lateral support as well as South-South & Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) among others to ensure maximum implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action;

vi. We commit to mobilizing resources for the conduct of the 2023 Population and Housing Census and all other scheduled socio-economic surveys and censuses as identified in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS 2017-2022).
MARCHING TO NAIROBI: USING POETRY AS A TOOL TO INSPIRE TRANSFORMATION

NEVER LET THE TEARS WIN: THIS IS WHY I MARCH BY ISATOU JALLOW

Female Voice: As a young person, able to make informed choices, I march to ensure the enjoyment of essential sexual and reproductive health and rights for all young people.

Male Voice: For me and all young men around the world, I march to create a world where men champion gender equality and fight the good fight for our women and girls.

Female Voice: To realize my full potentials as a youth and effect change for the next generation to thrive, I march for sustainable development.

Male Voice: When I tie my boots and head to Nairobi, I march for Sexual and Reproductive health and rights in humanitarian and fragile contexts.

Female Voice: I march for an end to Gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, because like me, women and girls around the world are still victims.
Poet:
Smile often my girl, they told her
Don’t you ever let the tears win
Lift your head up, baby girl
Don’t let them see how much you’ve been hurt
Wear your strength on your back
Don’t let them see how deep you’ve been cut
Wrap a bandage around that bleeding self-esteem
Don’t let them see you break down
Force a smile if you must
Blind them all with your glittering white teeth and the shine from your eyes
But remember
Don’t let them see you cry
Never let them see you struggle.
From breastfeeding with one arm, while cooking with the other
Hurling deep inside and still bearing another
Taking care of more kinds than I can count in both hands
Because the choice was never hers to make.
See you are a slave clothed in an angel’s clothing
Which makes you a beautiful angelic slave
Sent right from the clouds of heaven to up-under us
So you’ve got to be perfect
For this world.
So never let the tears win, they told her.
So she spread apart her thighs
Watched them take her chastity away
Each piece of her existence dripping out with the blood
That gave birth to her growth
She was only 3 but she didn’t cry
For she was reminded to never let the tears win.
Stay silent my child, they told her
A child isn’t one to speak before her elders
So keep your ideas in your head.
See they stabbed her generation
Dragged them through the mud of injustice
And drowned them all in the pool of inequality
Chained them with the shackles of child abuse
Threw them behind bars of malnutrition
Packaged their rights, and sent them straight to a bottomless pit of inequity.
But Mother Nature came to their rescue
Packaged all the dumped rights
Tied a bow around it and handed this over to them with a smile
Forced them back to their rich lands
Uplifted and fed their malnourished souls.
Nature taught her
The future is today, so they aren’t just children
She was more than the blade that sliced through her soul
More than the nights she starved to sleep
More than the long nights of watching over her dying child
More than the silence she was forced into, her voice lost
More than the dependence on man’s benevolence
More than the longing and the suffering
In the end, she understood she was more than just broken pieces.
She is why I march.
Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.

United Nations Population Fund
UN House, 5 Kofi Annan Street
Cape Point, Bakau
Banjul The Gambia

gambia.unfpa.org

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