



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Sustaining hope in a
time of uncertainties
**Delivering essential
services during the
COVID-19 pandemic**



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kunle Adeniyi

EDITORS

Alieu Sarr

Mbasireh Saidybah

EDITORIAL/PRODUCTION TEAM

Haddy Jonga

Maimuna Denton

CONTRIBUTORS

Maimuna Denton

Alieu Jammeh

Alhagie Kolley

Lamin Camara

Ramou Sonko

Joy Michael

Fatima Sonko

Mbasireh Saidybah

Haddy Jonga

PHOTOGRAPHY

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#EndGBV

Abbreviations and acronyms

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
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FP	Family Planning
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GFPA	Gambia Family Planning Association
GoTG	Government of The Gambia
ITC	Information and Communication Technology
LMIS	Logistics Management Information System
LSE	Life Skills Education
MDR	Maternal Death Audit Reviews
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoH	Ministry of Health
NDP	National Development Plan
NYC	National Youth Council
OSC	One Stop Center
PLWDs	Persons Living with Disabilities
POP/FLE	Population and Family Life Education
RCH	Reproductive and Child Health
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSTC	South-South & Triangular Cooperation
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework



Message from the Representative

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us in unimaginable ways both in terms of programme delivery and changing the ways we conduct business. The outbreak in March 2020 confronted UNFPA in The Gambia and all of our partners, including the Government of The Gambia, with an urgency to respond to the needs of the country. The UNFPA Country Office in partnership with other agencies supported and mobilized resources through re-programming and other resource mobilization efforts to respond to the government's national response plan and endeavour to meet the essential needs of women and girls during the pandemic. Working together with our partners, we delivered on a mutual resolve to work towards UNFPA's three transformative results: end preventable maternal deaths, end the unmet need for family planning and end gender-based violence.

This report highlights the important results the Country Programme has achieved in its response to COVID-19 and for women, girls and young people in delivering for The Gambia in 2020. This life-saving work was accompanied by continuous advocacy in support of our programmes, and for policies that promote and protect the rights of our constituents, so that every woman, girl and young person can obtain the needed healthcare and reach their maximum potential.

To improve maternal and newborn outcomes, the UNFPA Country Office in 2020 invested in the three main pillars for maternal death reduction. With support from UNFPA, strengthening of the Essau District Hospital enabled this facility to provide comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn care (CEmONC) services for the first time in its history. UNFPA supported training for the hospital's

medical personnel in the signal functions of basic emergency obstetric and newborn care (BEmONC) to enhance staff capacity, refurbished the operating theatre and doctor's quarters, and provided medical equipment and supplies to facilitate the provision of essential services.

Through the UNFPA Supplies programme, the Country Office continued to expand the community-based distribution programmes that bring services closer to over 150 underserved, hard-to-reach and deprived communities under the Community-Based Family Planning Programme in The Gambia.

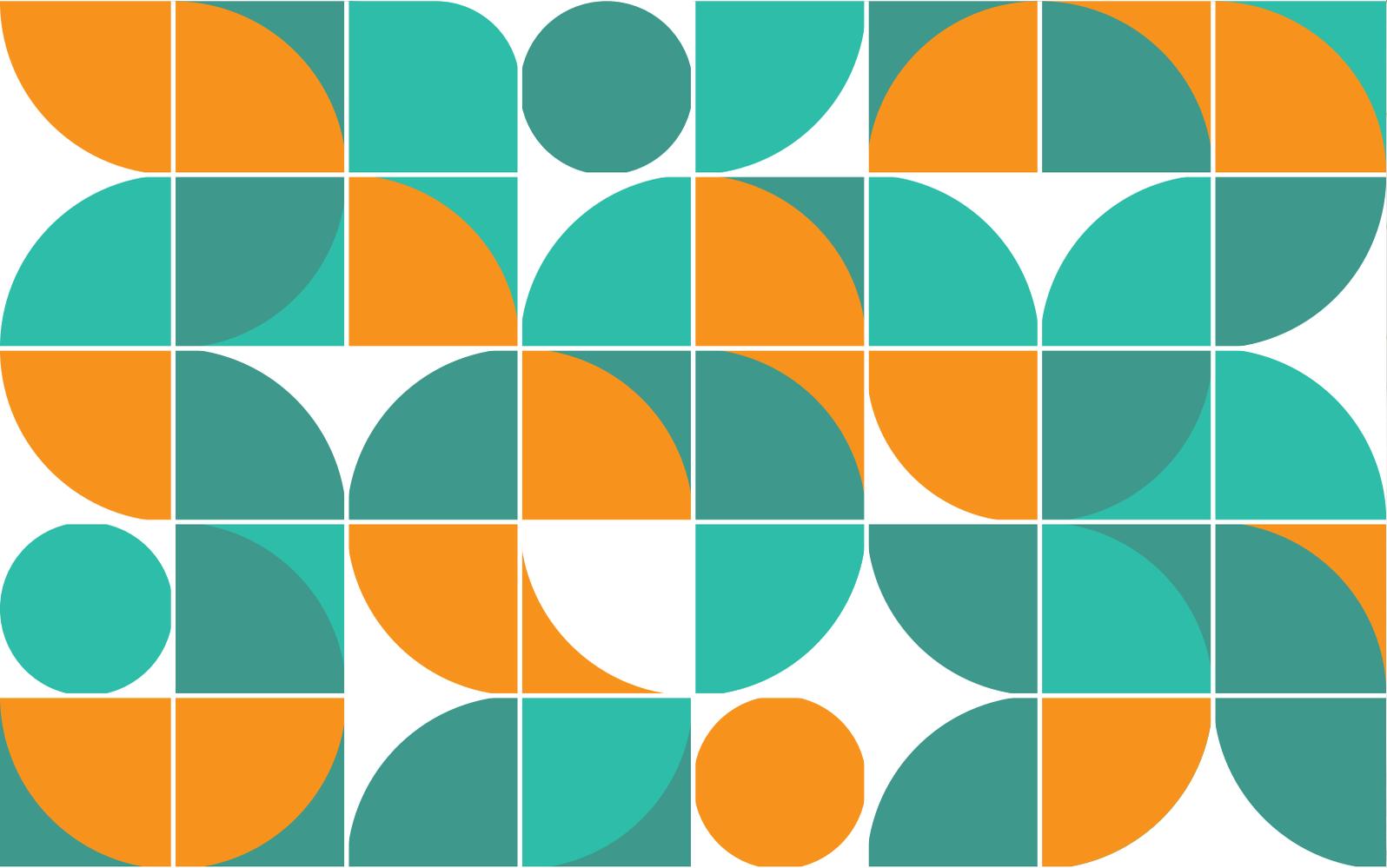
In addition, we reinforced investments in strengthening our response to ending gender-based violence (GBV) and other harmful practices, especially in light of COVID-19. The Country Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and other partners, launched the first-ever National GBV Response Helpline in the country, provided technical and financial support to five One-Stop Centres for comprehensive GBV case management, and promoted capacity building for healthcare and social workers in the provision of psychosocial counselling and clinical management of rape.

While we forged ahead in 2020, we remain cognisant of the realities of COVID-19 and the risks it poses to women, girls and other vulnerable populations. We will intensify our efforts in strengthening our partnership, through vigorous policy advocacy, resource mobilization and efficient programme delivery for our constituents, furthering the principle of leaving no one behind.

Kunle Adeniyi
UNFPA Country Representative



UNFPA representative presents dignity kits and food supplies to internally displaced persons in Sanyang



CHAPTER ONE

Programme Report



Ending preventable maternal death

Improving the quality of maternity care services at all levels of care delivery in the country is a priority for the Ministry of Health and UNFPA. This is recognised as an important step towards enhancing positive pregnancy outcomes including reduction of maternal and new-born morbidity and mortality. To improve maternal and new-born health services and outcomes in The Gambia, UNFPA in 2020 invested in the 3 main pillars that are impetus to maternal death reduction; Family Planning, Skilled Birth Attendant and Emergency Obstetric Care Services. In addition two critical elements were also strengthened, Reproductive Health Commodity and Maternal Death Surveillance.

Essau District Hospital was strengthened to provide Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care Services for the first time in its history. The operating theatre and doctor's quarters were refurbished and medical equipment and supplies provided to facilitate the provision of essential services. In addition, personnel were trained on BeMONC Signal Function to enhance their capacity in the provision of emergency obstetric care services.

3 MAIN PILLARS



Results

234
maternal deaths averted

Essau District Hospital strengthened to provide CeMONC services

3 Health Facilities strengthened to provide BemONC services



12 Service providers were trained on BemONC Signal function

Maternal Death Audit Reviews (MDRs) have been institutionalised in the hospitals and major health facilities to better understand the causes of maternal deaths with efforts aimed at averting the high maternal mortality. Lessons learnt from MDRs are used to inform decision making

Medical equipment and supplies worth (\$976,690) procured to facilitate provision of emergency obstetric care services



A second chance at life: Escaping the grip of obstetric fistula



For every woman, everywhere, pregnancy and childbirth should be a journey filled with love, joy and hope. However, for nearly 2 million women around the world, this experience is taken away by one of the most tragic childbirth injuries – obstetric fistula. The condition, which is often the result of prolonged or obstructed labour, unskilled delivery or female genital mutilation (FGM), among other factors, leaves women with little to no hope of living a life of renewed dignity. They are often deserted by family and isolated from community life. Guided by a mission to ensure that all women in The Gambia live healthy and dignified lives, UNFPA under its current Country Programme (2017–2021) is supporting the Ministry of Health to provide free fistula repair surgeries.

“I used to be ashamed to attend public gatherings because of the fear of soiling my clothes,” recalls Fatou Dumbuya, a resident of Serrekunda, near the capital city of Banjul. In 2017, Fatou realized she had an injury as a result of trying to reverse the harm caused by FGM type three performed on her when she was a child. Fatou lived in silence with the condition for nearly two years, until she benefitted from a UNFPA-supported surgery organized by the Ministry of Health in December 2019.

Fatou shared the challenge it posed to her daily life. “Even in my home, I did not feel comfortable moving around. I was always conscious of keeping the condition as mine and my husband’s secret,” she said.

According to Fatou’s husband, Boye, it was a difficult period marked with financial and social difficulties. When asked how they worked through this time in their home, Boye described a defining moment: “On one of our visits to the hospital, we found a lady with the same condition whose husband had left at the facility and never returned. This had a huge impact on me and I was determined to not be the husband to abandon my wife. I wanted to be the only one to take care of her. This was our battle and we were going to fight it together.”

Fatou and her husband, both teachers, are now back to work supporting their family and are practicing birth spacing with the support of family planning services. They have also committed to not subjecting their daughters to FGM if they ever have any girls.

From 2018 to 2020 UNFPA has supported 40 fistula repair surgeries in The Gambia. In addition to the provision of repair surgeries, the agency continues to support the strengthening of sexual and reproductive health care, including timely and quality emergency obstetric services to prevent fistulas from occurring in the first place.





Ending unmet need for family planning

In its National Health Strategic Plan (2014–2020), the Government of The Gambia articulates a need to reduce maternal and newborn death in the country by using family planning as a key strategy for realizing this goal. The National Family Planning Policy allows people to attain their desired number of children and determine the spacing of pregnancies. With respect to family planning uptake, access factors, combined with poor women's ability to travel outside the home because of low socioeconomic status, contribute to delay in access and the record-low national contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR).

Given that a high percentage of the Gambian population live in remote rural areas that are disadvantaged in terms of family planning coverage, there is a constant need to expand and strengthen efforts to bring services closer to underserved communities. As a result, the UNFPA Supplies programme supported the establishment of a Community-Based Family Planning Programme in The Gambia that now reaches more than 150 underserved, hard-to-reach and deprived communities. As part of this effort, the Logistics Management Information System (LMIS) is being monitored to reach the last mile, to reduce stock-outs and support the supply chain management system.

Results

51,496

unintended pregnancies averted



1

4



100

Community Based Distributors (CBDs) were trained on the provision of Family planning and Reproductive Health information.

265,115

couple years of protection generated



2

5



45,330

new family planning acceptors were recorded, a 40 per cent reduction compared to 2019, this drop was attributed to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

140

Nurses and Midwives were trained on contraceptive technology



3

6



6,123

New Family Planning Acceptors were recorded by GFPA of which 75 per cent was under the CBD programme

Ensuring rights and choices to those furthest behind, one community at a time



Limited human resources, sociocultural misconceptions and infrastructural deficiencies continue to make access to family planning a major challenge, particularly for the rural Gambian woman. The CBD programme addresses these challenges and creates access where it ordinarily was not present.

Fatou Yaffa, 37, is a volunteer community-based distribution agent in the CBD programme covering Suma Kunda, a community of about 350 residents, as well as surrounding border villages that depend on the small settlement to access family planning information and services through Fatou. Many challenges hinder access to services and the community's acceptance of the role of family planning in enhancing family wellbeing and promoting women's health. Rumours, misinformation and strong male opposition continue to prevail in communities such as Fatou's. "Sometimes, men chase me out of their compounds to keep their wives from talking to me about accessing services. Sometimes, women come to meet me at home at night when nobody is watching," Fatou said. She believes this is part of the reason why women in some communities are compelled to leave their family planning cards at health facilities for safekeeping and confidentiality.

Due to limited access to resources and opportunities to empower themselves and their families, rural Gambian women are also faced with financial and economic challenges. As a way of incentivizing volunteers under the

CBD programme, UNFPA provided them with hand-milling machines to serve as a source of income and also support their families. For Fatou, the hand-milling machine is another tool for her to mobilize community members to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues and women's health and wellbeing in particular. "The machine has brought about more peace in my community because we all come together to use it, discuss issues we are facing and seek support. It has also improved communication between married couples particularly about sexual and reproductive health matters," she said.

The mother of three has recently moved to Basse to live with her husband where she is also delivering services to women in her neighbourhood, while still commuting twice every month to Suma Kunda to continue delivering access to choice for every woman in her village. Through her work, Fatou provides services to nearly 400 women and about 250 men in Suma Kunda and its environs with family planning supplies. In 2020, 75 per cent of new family planning acceptors recorded by GFPA were gained through the CBD programme under which Fatou volunteers, demonstrating why this initiative continues to prove vital in reaching the last mile.





Ending gender-based violence and harmful practices

The Gambia is a country where 1 in 4 women are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. There exists a high prevalence rate of FGM as 73 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 are mutilated, (DHS, 2020) while 34.2 per cent of girls under the age of 18 are married (MICS, 2018). In addition to this, 55 per cent of women aged 15–49 agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the specified

reasons. There is no data on the prevalence of reporting to either police or social actors for seeking any forms of support after being victimized, a situation that contributes to a culture of impunity. There is also a lack of coordinated, confidential and safe service provision for GBV survivors coupled with limited trained personnel on GBV case management, which is hindering the system and thus preventing survivors from



accessing the necessary support at the right time.

With the high prevalence rates of GBV in The Gambia coupled with the projected increase in incidences of GBV as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 UNFPA supported the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and other stakeholders to establish



a functional and coordinated mechanism to prevent and respond to GBV cases and ensure that survivors are receiving quality care. This was done through capacity strengthening on GBV case management for case managers, social workers, child protection workers and other GBV service providers. The agency also supported the establishment and refurbishment of One-Stop Centres and women's safe spaces, such as the Women's Multipurpose Centres, and the development of Standard Operating Procedures for One-Stop Centres and a GBV referral pathway.

Results

National FGM Strategy developed



80 service providers trained on the management of FGM complications

7702 people reached with messages on GBV and harmful practices through sensitisation activities in 100 communities



40 community leaders,
40 women leaders and
40 Islamic leaders in 9 districts in URR empowered to continue in advocating against FGM and other harmful traditional practices

150 boys and men were involved in advocacy to end FGM



4 Network and Taskforce groups established in CRR, URR, LRR and NBR to monitor and report cases of FGM through the established reporting channels

30 service providers trained on psychosocial counselling



90 Mother's' Club members in 3 districts trained on the FGM law to enable them serve as change agents against the practice in their communities





From survivor to activist:

how Fatou Saho is using her voice to end FGM

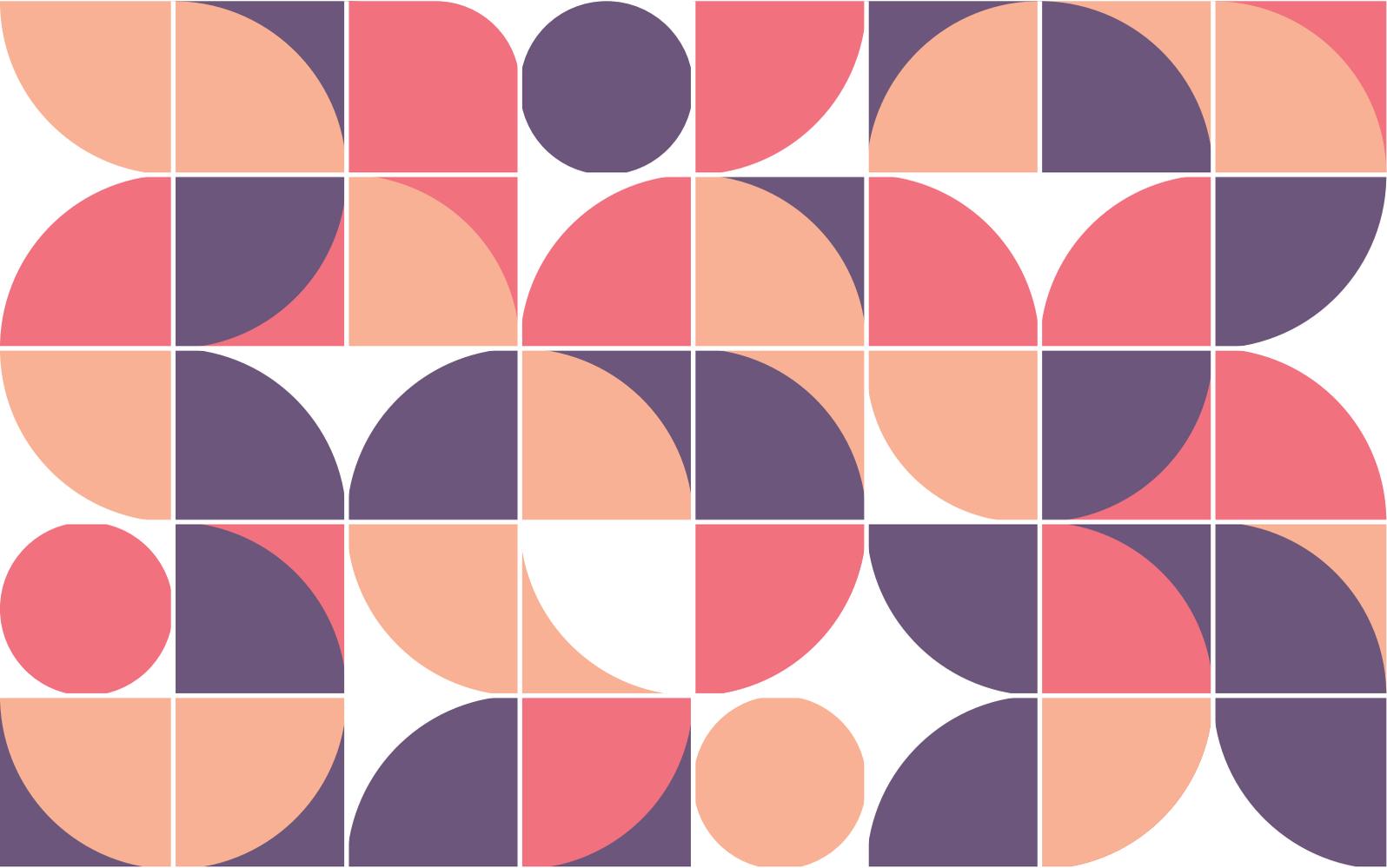
“When I was about 2 years old, without my mother’s consent, my Aunties took me to my father’s village, Bondali Tenda, to have me circumcised.” – This is the story of Fatou Saho, a 24-year-old human rights activist and nurse who currently works with the UNFPA-supported Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP).

FGM is a deep-rooted cultural practice around the world including in The Gambia. Fatou is part of the 76 per cent of women and girls between age 15 and 49 who have undergone the practice in The Gambia. At the age of 2, when young girls around the world are perfecting their baby steps, Fatou was robbed of her rights because adults around her believed a child had no say in what happens to her body. “Growing up learning and experiencing certain things, I realized that a part of me was taken away,” she said.

Working with GAMCOTRAP has developed Fatou’s potential and sharpened her voice to lead change. “Since I graduated from the School of Nursing, no girl in my family has undergone FGM,” she said. She has travelled the length and breadth of the country educating women and girls on the harmful

effects of FGM. With a strong understanding of the female anatomy, Fatou believes that “every single body part serves a purpose and nobody has the right to tamper with her physical make up.” She also believes that 10 years from now, women and girls who were subjected to the practice can look back at their journeys and recognize that they have contributed towards ensuring that their siblings, children, neighbours and girls in their communities have been set free from FGM by speaking up now against the practice. In order to eradicate FGM, Fatou says there is a need to engage women in communities to understand the negative consequences of the practice on their health and wellbeing and to popularize the anti-FGM law, so as to influence voluntary abandonment. Fatou’s message to perpetrators and the entire world is that “FGM violates the sexual and reproductive health and rights of children. We must all push for an end to the practice!”

UNFPA continues work with partners such as GAMCOTRAP to enhance grassroots mobilization and promote community abandonment of FGM by building the capacities of women, girls and young people, engaging traditional leaders and communicators and empowering girls to say no to the practice.



CHAPTER TWO

Programme Enablers



Investing in youth

The Gambia has a youthful population with 42 per cent of the country's population below the age of 15 and 64 per cent below 24. The country is faced with the likely scenario of having the population double by 2030 due to several factors: high levels of child marriage leading to risks of longer lifetime fertility and its consequences on socioeconomic development; a contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) of 19 per cent; and an unmet need for family planning of 24 per cent among married women and 45 per cent among sexually active unmarried women.

The youthful nature of the country's population presents both a challenge and opportunity. The challenge is that the population will continue to be a dependent population, making it increasingly unlikely that The Gambia will ever harness its potential "demographic dividend". The opportunity is that The Gambia has what it takes for modest investments that can yield greater impact in a short space of time; further, the youthful

nature of the population is the perfect model to achieve this impact. Young people must be seen as a resource and an opportunity for growth, development, upholding human rights, peace, security and justice. The starting point, however, is making investments in sexual and reproductive health and protecting reproductive rights for all adolescents and young people, including persons with disability.

UNFPA, guided by the above, consolidated its work on building the capacity of young people, especially in the decision making space, by supporting the annual National Youth Retreat with a dialogue focused on electoral reforms, institutional strengthening of national youth organizations and networks, and implementing novel initiatives to facilitate delivery of and access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. In the area of peace and security, a number of initiatives have been implemented to promote social cohesion with the participation of young people.

Sourcing population data for development



UNFPA attaches importance to the availability of data for development planning, monitoring and evaluation. The agency has been serving as an advocate for data for development within the United Nations Country Team, engaging in rigorous advocacy efforts for population and housing censuses and intercensal surveys. Although a population and housing census will not be conducted during the current programme cycle, the agency is already supporting preparatory work on the 2023 Population and Housing Census beginning with the drafting of a Census Project Document. There are plans to continue to provide financial, material and technical support to the census in addition to leading the resource mobilization efforts.

Completed in 2020, the UNFPA Country Office advocated for the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2019/20) to be carried out, and led related resource mobilization efforts. The results of the survey were finalized towards the end of December 2020. Production of the final results of this survey proved timely, informing work

on the extension of the current Country Programme (2017–2021) and preparatory work on the development of the next United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2023–2026) and eventually the next Country Programme Document (2023–2026). UNFPA recognizes the importance of the DHS in providing much-needed data for development; in The Gambia, the DHS is one of the most important sources of demographic and health data.

For a better understanding of the dynamics that influence key indicators captured in the DHS (2019/20), the Country Office is supporting an in-depth analysis of the DHS data to better understand factors influencing some of the rates observed in some indicators. It is expected that triangulation of some of the characteristics of the sampled population in the survey with some of the indicators will provide insight into some of the confounding factors that influence the indicators captured in the survey.

Supporting the provision of comprehensive sexuality education



Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is one of five prongs of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth. Over the last four years, as part of the UNFPA/Government of The Gambia 8th Country Programme 2017–21, major strides have been made towards the development and incorporation of CSE and life skills education (LSE) in the school curriculum. UNFPA has supported the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in developing a CSE curriculum for basic and secondary schools.

In order to ensure a wider reach and generate interest in CSE, development of a mobile phone application named Suma Tyme was initiated with support from UNFPA. Suma Tyme is a cross-media life skills app that enables and encourages young people to engage with sexual and reproductive health issues. The aim is to empower adolescents and youth with accurate

and non-judgmental information on sexual and reproductive health to improve young people's reproductive health, promote gender equality and reduce risky behaviours. The platform will use information and communication technology (ICT) to expand access to comprehensive, rights-based sexual and reproductive health information in The Gambia. This app is being developed in response to the need for a reliable yet informative, rights-based and innovative educational tool to provide information about sexual and reproductive health and other health concerns to adolescents and youth. It will leverage the increasing expansion of mobile phones and the Internet to deliver engaging content via mobile applications popular with young people in The Gambia. The app will be rolled out in 2021.

Leaving no one behind

Persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) have limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services as a result of cultural and traditional barriers, stigma and discrimination, taboos and other challenges. In The Gambia, like in many countries, the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of PLWDs as well as their vulnerabilities to sexual and gender-based violence are often neglected. There are limited programmes and initiatives that address such needs and the lack of strong policies further compound this challenge.

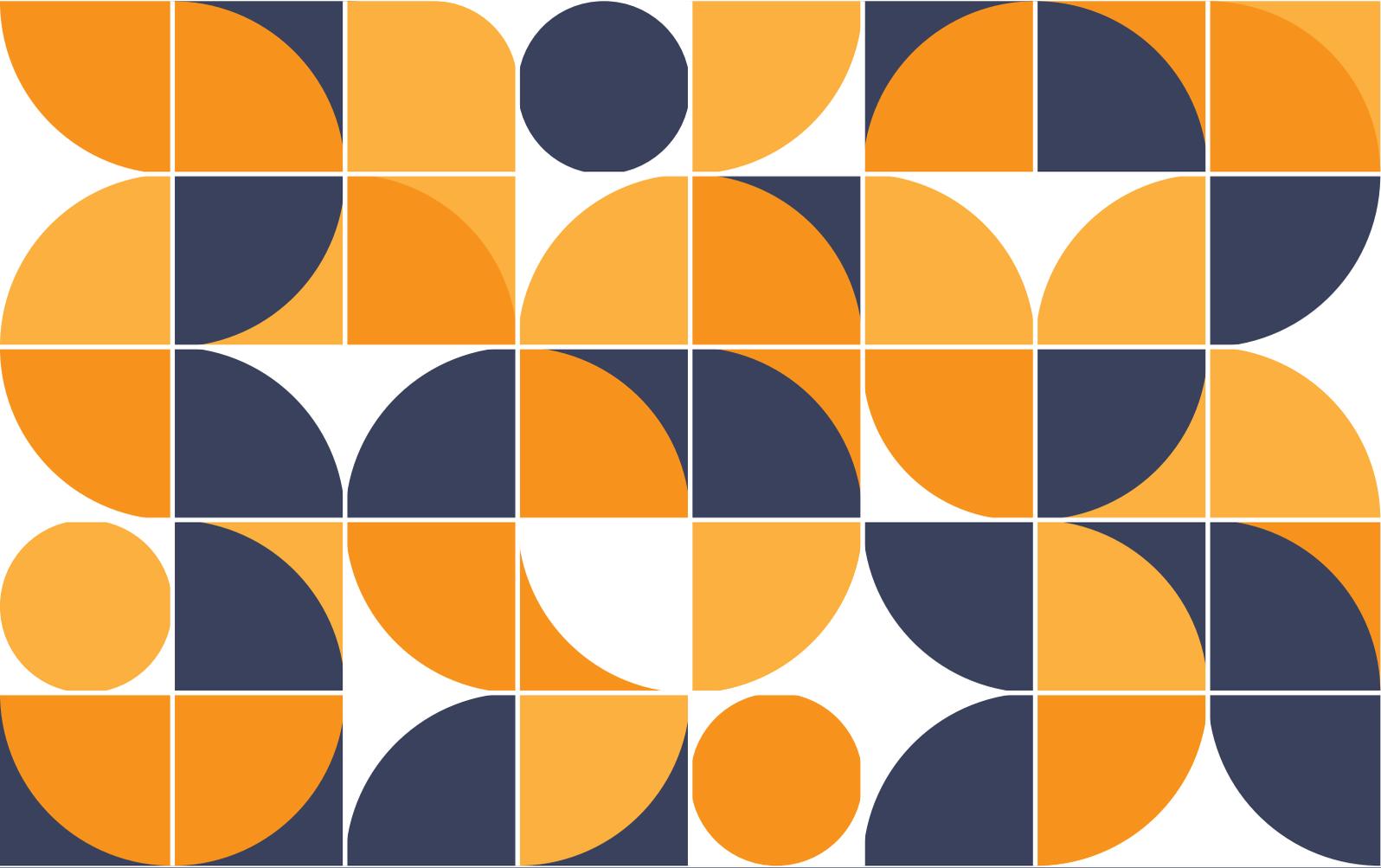
It is important to understand and acknowledge that persons living with disabilities have sexual and reproductive health needs and rights just like everyone else and neglecting this fact will have a direct bearing on the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically on goals 3, 4, 5, 16 and 17.

The central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable

Development Goals is to leave no one behind (LNOB), which is also cardinal to the work of UNFPA in ensuring that those furthest behind are reached first. In 2020, the Country Office established partnerships with The Gambia Federation of Persons Living with Disabilities and Fantanka (Mandinka word for prevention) to provide information and services to persons living with disabilities. Some 100 young people including persons with physical disability, deaf and hard of hearing, visually impaired and albinos participated in initial capacity building activities on issues of gender, awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and the accessibility, acceptability and availability of services for persons with disabilities. This initiative is part of ongoing efforts to ensure inclusion in the work of UNFPA and, ultimately, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.







CHAPTER THREE

**Delivering Impact
In The Face Of
Covid-19**



COR NAVIRUS
#COVID-19

The medical personnel should also wear proper PPE

ANTENATAL



Risk communication and community engagement

In order to enhance access to COVID-19 information and tackle rumours and misinformation, UNFPA supported the production of information material on COVID-19 and facilitated much-needed conversations on the impact of the pandemic on various areas of development.

Through the United Nations Youth Group as part of its Decade of Action activities, the Country Office organized a series of webinars (brown bags) to discuss the implication of COVID-19 on young people, covering different themes that holistically examined the impacts on the young people of The Gambia, suggested interventions to mitigate the negative impacts and sought opportunities that existed under the prevailing situation.

Additionally, the Country Office produced communication material including billboards and posters and presented them to local government authorities and youth-led grassroots for use in COVID-19 sensitization activities. The posters produced in both English and Arabic contained information about preventive methods, symptoms and how to get help when needed. The Country Office also produced short general-awareness videos on how to protect oneself from the virus in English and five local languages. These videos are part of the resources the Ministry of Health has available on its website and other platforms and have been widely shared with various networks. The videos also feature sign-language interpretation, in order to ensure that the deaf and the hard of hearing are not left behind.

Ways you can protect Yourself from **COR NAVIRUS** #COVID-19



#StayHealthyStayHome



COR NAVIRUS
#COVID-19

However, it is best for her to wear a mask during breastfeeding, in order to avoid infecting the baby through droplets



Results





Ensuring continuity of sexual and reproductive health services

Health systems are confronted with rapidly increasing demand generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and both financial and human resources are being diverted towards the response. The situation is especially challenging in low-income countries where health systems are weak and fragile. When health systems are overwhelmed, both direct mortality from an outbreak and indirect mortality from other diseases can increase dramatically. Services to provide sexual, reproductive and child health care are at risk of being side-lined, which will lead to higher maternal and child mortality and morbidity. To ensure that all women and girls have access to a continuum of sexual, repro-

ductive and child health services, while the pandemic response continues, UNFPA and other sister agencies supported the Ministry of Health in the development of an operational guidance for maintaining essential reproductive and child health (RCH) services during the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with WHO guidance, it calls for the continuity of RCH clinics and outreach services that are provided countrywide, delivering essential services such as immunization, nutrition services, antenatal, postnatal and family planning services and the reorganization of RCH clinics to enable social distancing and infection prevention and control.

Results

3496

calls received through the GBV helpline out of which 2619 were GBV related

1169

survivors received Psychosocial First Aid through the GBV Helpline



GBV posters targeting Survivors, Police and Communities were developed and circulated in police stations, health facilities and the community at large

A promotional video on Police working with communities to break the silence on GBV was also developed and disseminated to raise awareness



Preventing and responding to Gender-Based Violence

With funding from the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (UN MPTF) COVID-19 support to protect women, children and other vulnerable groups from GBV during this critical period, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and partnered with Paradise Foundation to launch the first-ever National GBV Response Helpline in The Gambia. The Helpline offers psychosocial first aid services to survivors and creates a linkage with intervention services through the GBV referral pathway. Additionally, information and guidance to women and girls, parents and professionals working on GBV related issues was provided.

In order to strengthen the capacity of those working with the GBV response system, a Training of Trainers was organized in July 2020 on GBV case management together with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to enhance service delivery. The training targeted frontline social workers, case managers, psychosocial support staff and the police to create a resource pool of GBV case managers who will cascade training for more service providers.

To strengthen the GBV response service delivery, a GBV referral pathway and a service directory was developed together with Standard Operating Procedures for the One-Stop Centres. UNFPA is also working with the Ministry of Health and plans to establish four One-Stop Centres in the health facilities in Soma Health Facility LRR, Bansang Health Facility CRR, URR Basse Health Centre and Brikama District Hospital, WCR.

To ensure that law enforcement personnel are equipped with the tools and skills to respond to GBV cases and ensure survivors are able to access justice, UNFPA in partnership with The Gambia Police Force and Paradise Foundation oriented police officers on reporting, documentation and investigation of GBV cases through an initiative called "Breaking the Silence in the fight against GBV". The initiative is geared towards promoting community confidence in the police to respond to incidents of GBV and empower police officers to engage communities in GBV awareness conversations.

Results

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A promotional video on Police working with communities to break the silence on GBV was also developed and disseminated to raise awareness

125

GBV survivors received psychosocial support and GBV case management services



Standard operating procedures for the management of the 5 one-stop centres in the following regions URR, CRR, LRR, WCR and KMC

5 GBV survivors referred to the shelter for children and 26 survivors receiving counselling and reintegration support Police members were oriented fully about the importance of reporting and recording in progressing cases and statistics. Reporting tools were circulated



Standard operating procedures for the management of the 5 one-stop centres in the following regions URR, CRR, LRR, WCR and KMC

Orientation visits on GBV reporting were conducted to 16 police stations



A GBV referral pathway developed to link survivors to other GBV services



Providing mental health and psychosocial support

Due to the evolving situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on lives and livelihoods, a new reality that threatened the health, wellness and security of all people was created. The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs increased for many groups, including frontline health workers, persons in quarantine and treatment centres as well as families living in fear and anxiety resulting from the uncertainties perpetuated by the pandemic. As such, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health to enhance provision of MHPSS services. UNFPA undertook a variety of capacity building efforts: putting in

place infrastructure and enhancing service delivery through the training of service providers on GBV Case Management, training health workers on the clinical management of rape, developing a GBV referral pathway and establishing a National GBV Helpline, among other activities. These investments are meant to streamline GBV and MHPSS service provision and reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic by creating a close and coordinated relationship between all actors and ensuring the provision of the best possible care to those who need it.

Supporting women and youth to live dignified lives

The essential needs of women and girls are often overlooked and easily neglected during emergency situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This is why as part of its contribution to the National COVID-19 Response, UNFPA supported the provision of dignity kits and other sexual and reproductive health supplies to women and young people in The Gambia.

In partnership with The Gambia Red Cross Society, UNFPA distributed dignity kits to women and girls in Basse, URR following a situational analysis conducted in the region. The kits were meant to help ensure

that women and girls' access to essential sexual and reproductive health commodities and services is not limited during the pandemic.

As part of its mandate to ensure healthy pregnancies and safe motherhood for all women, the agency also provided food and sanitary supplies and baby items to pregnant and breastfeeding women in quarantine and treatment centres. Similarly, persons in quarantine centres were provided with dignity kits to help ensure their health, wellbeing and safety while undergoing mandatory quarantine.

Results

100

Dignity kits delivered to persons under quarantine



300

women and girls in the Upper River Region provided with dignity kits

Enhancing surveillance and contact tracing

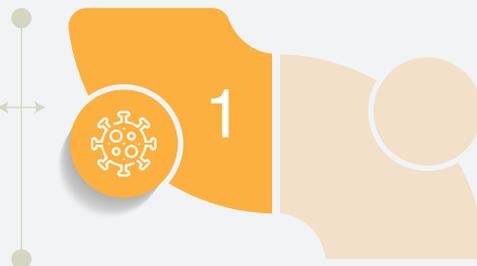
Disease surveillance and contact tracing are public health strategies used to tackle the spread of contagious and deadly viruses and are key in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to the Ministry of Health's request for support to strengthen contact tracing and surveillance of COVID-19 in The Gambia, UNFPA in 2020 undertook various efforts to enhance the national surveillance mechanism. In April 2020, the agency presented motorcycles, helmets and other equipment to the Honourable Minister of Health Dr. Ahmadou Lamin Samteh. Furthermore, aware of the valuable contributions of young

people in various COVID-19 response activities, UNFPA and the Ministry of Health supported The Gambia Red Cross Society and the National Youth Council to roll out a community contact tracing and surveillance initiative in the Central River and Upper River Regions of The Gambia. This pilot initiative was run by 80 youth volunteers in the two regions as part of efforts to strengthen youth involvement and participation in the National COVID-19 Response in order to promote infection prevention and control, which in turn will help ensure continued delivery of essential health services including maternal health services.

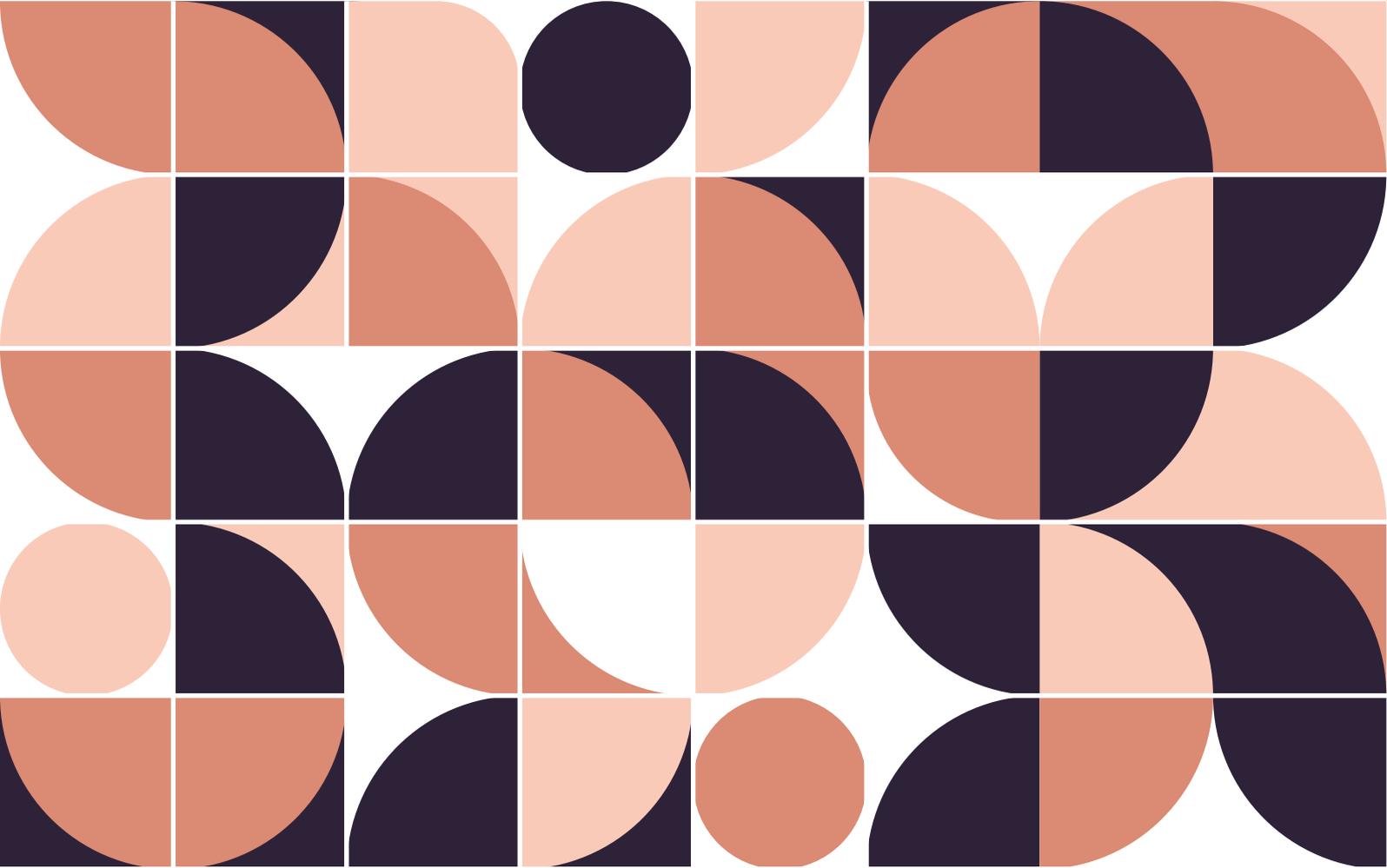
Results

80

youth in CRR and URR trained and engaged in COVID-19 community surveillance and contact tracing







CHAPTER FOUR

**Taking the message
to the people**



Dismantling gender roles, celebrating women's strides and reflecting on progress made towards realizing gender equality to mark IWD 2020

Achieving gender equality by 2030 remains an everyday goal and drive at UNFPA. We imagine a world where women and girls have equal access to services and opportunities as do their male counterparts, and a world with no FGM, child marriage or any form of gender-based violence. We long for days where girls everywhere can dream and realize those dreams. This vision we are hopeful to achieve by 2030 through collaborative efforts with government, civil society organizations and individuals.

On 8 March 2020, UNFPA joined the rest of the world to commemorate International Women's Day (IWD) on the global theme "I am generation equality: Realizing Women's Rights" through various activities. UNFPA's commemoration started with a learning session for United Nations staff in The Gambia hosted by the Gender Technical Group to discuss ways in which the UN is championing efforts to promote gender equality in The Gambia and how and we can fully realize it by 2030.

In The Gambia, it is widely accepted that women and girls are responsible for household chores to prepare them for marriage, which affects their education and contributes significantly to child marriage in the country. As the agency that chairs the UN's Gender Technical Working Group and the UN Communications Group, UNFPA led a reversed gender roles simulation at the Greater Banjul Upper and Senior Secondary School. Through this activity, the boys in the school were tasked to cook for the girls, in order to understand what their sisters and mothers go through every day, how this affects their wellbeing and how boys can meaningfully

contribute to dismantling gender roles. In addition to this, the students presented a play where students played reverse roles as a form of advocacy towards deconstructing gender roles and building an equal world.

Similarly, the Country Office supported She Awards Gambia to celebrate women contributing to meaningful development and changing lives in The Gambia. As the first of its kind in the country, this was a memorable night as it clearly showed how far we have come in advancing gender equality and how much further we must go to achieve it by 2030.

Engaging the media to commemorate World Population Day

The commemoration of World Population Day presents an opportunity each year for countries to reflect on emerging population trends and identify ways to improve on issues affecting their populations. On 10 July 2020, Her Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia and the UNFPA Country Representative engaged the media on this year's World Population Day theme: "Putting the brakes on COVID-19: how to safeguard the health and rights of women and girls now".

Speaking at the engagement, Her Excellency the Vice President Dr. Isatou Touray highlighted that "during emergencies, attention and critical resources are diverted from the provision of sexual and reproductive health, rights and wellbeing of women and girls, causing delays in implementation and making the achievement of these goals a distant reality." This, she said, calls for concerted efforts to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not impede the rights and

wellbeing of women and girls in The Gambia and that the government of The Gambia and its partners are working closely to make this a reality.

Delivering the partnership statement, UNFPA Country Representative Mr. Kunle Adeniyi reiterated that "during this pandemic, the communities we serve, particularly women and girls have been forced into new realities that expose them to heightened risks thus threatening their dignity, wellbeing and security." He recognized that as The Gambia continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate impact on various sectors of society, attention must be drawn to the vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls. Mr. Adeniyi concluded his statement by calling on all stakeholders to synergize efforts to end the COVID-19 pandemic and the parallel pandemic of gender-based violence, "because together we can put the brakes on COVID-19 and safeguard the health and rights of women and girls now!"



World
Population
Day

First Lady launches State of World Population report and National GBV Helpline

Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. During the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result of restrictions put in place to contain the spread of the virus, incidences of violence are most likely to increase because women and girls are forced to stay at home and in some cases with their abusers.

This reality calls for strategic efforts to put in place a GBV response mechanism that caters to the needs of victims and survivors and ensures protection, quality emergency healthcare and access to justice.

Responding to this need, UNFPA The Gambia unveiled the National Gender-Based Violence Helpline 1313 as part of the official launch in June of the 2020 State of World Population (SWOP) report on the theme "Against my will: defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality".

The helpline responds to the needs of victims/survivors of violence such as rape, Intimate Partner Violence, assault, among others. It is part of efforts by UNFPA to support the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare through the UN MPTF aimed at mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

Speaking at the ceremony, the UN Resident Coordinator in The Gambia, Ms. Seraphine Wakana, noted the MPTF project seeks to increase the capacity of the government and communities to suppress the transmission of COVID-19 and to increase access to quality treatment through strong collaboration with the non-health sector, augmenting the continuum of

care and protection of most vulnerable in addressing sexual and gender-based violence, stress, fear and the shock of COVID-19.

UNFPA Country Representative Mr. Kunle Adeniyi highlighted the launch of the helpline on the global SWOP launch day as no coincidence because the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in heightened risks for women and girls to be subjected to harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage, which the 2020 SWOP focuses on. According to Mr. Adeniyi, the 2020 SWOP report makes the case that countries have an obligation under international human rights law to end these practices around the globe, as harmful practices cause profound and lasting trauma to women and girls and rob them of their right to reach their potential in life.

Delivering the official launch statement, Her Excellency the First Lady of the Republic of The Gambia, Madam Fatoumatta Bah-Barrow, reiterated her office's commitment to support initiatives geared towards ensuring the protection, wellbeing and empowerment of women and girls of The Gambia and expressed appreciation to UNFPA for always supporting women and girls of the country to live in dignity and health. The First Lady commended the National GBV Helpline as timely, as the incidences of domestic and gender-based violence have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic and The Gambia is not an exception. She called on all to put efforts together to address these issues and enable women and girls to live dignified lives. "Together, we will win," the First Lady said.

1313 TOLL FREE NATIONAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE HELPLINE



First Lady
launches National
GBV Helpline



Intensifying efforts to end GBV as part of 16 Days of Activism

A series of events were organized by UNFPA and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and other partners to bring to light issues around GBV in The Gambia, call for action to protect the rights of women and girls, and advocate for the implementation of laws and policies to safeguard an equal future for all. The partners joined the globally-observed 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence that commences on 25 November, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, marking International Human Rights Day.

The theme for this year's commemoration "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!" focused on four key action areas to end GBV around the world, especially during the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Commemorations in The Gambia highlighted the need for various stakeholders to take action to end violence and popularize existing mechanisms put in place to prevent and respond to GBV in all settings.

Throughout the 16-day period, UNFPA released two-minute videos of public figures sharing GBV messages. Speaking to the public in one of the videos, the Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly, Madam Mariam Jack-Denton said that "GBV is a cancerous practice that eats at the fabrics of social cohesion and progress of any society."

UNFPA, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, The Gambia Police Force and the Network

against Gender-Based Violence held a TV panel discussion to talk about the country's GBV response mechanism and how various stakeholders are equipped to be responsive to survivors' needs. The Honourable Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare Madam Fatou Kinteh said that reporting cases of GBV in communities is a collective responsibility that must be upheld by all.

To crown the various activities organized during the campaign, UNFPA and the Ministry held a signature solidarity event titled "Orange The Gambia – Lighting up of the Youth Monument" at Westfield, led by Her Excellency the First Lady of The Gambia Madam Fatoumatta Bah-Barrow, to signify the need to accelerate efforts to end all forms of gender-based violence in The Gambia. "As I turn on the lights, I would like to remind us all of our sacred responsibility to protect the fundamental human rights of all, including protecting women and girls in The Gambia from violence and abuse," she said.

Delivering their welcome remarks, UNFPA Country Representative Mr. Kunle Adeniyi and the Lord Mayor of the Kanifing Municipality Mr. Talib Ahmed Bensouda both emphasized that survivors of violence need to be assured that they can receive emergency care that meets their needs. He said that we must always remember that women and girls before being our mothers, sisters and daughters, are whole human beings with fundamental rights and freedoms that must be respected at all times without reservation.

Resource Mobilization

Through strengthened partnerships and resource mobilization, the Country Office mobilized resources to finance and support the implementation of its 8th Country Programme and to respond to critical needs during the pandemic. The resources raised from the generous contributions of our partners have provided critical support for life-saving work towards the COVID-19 national response and the UNFPA three zeros: zero maternal death, zero unmet need for family planning and zero gender-based violence.

In 2020, the Country Office mobilized \$2.16 million (\$2,159,496) through a project of the UN-Multi Partner Trust Fund to increase capacity of the government and the communities to suppress transmission and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in The Gambia, and through three projects of the UN PeaceBuilding Fund (PBF):

- 1) Strengthening community coping mechanisms against risks of climate induced conflicts and to minimize gender-related vulnerabilities and tensions in The Gambia;
- 2) Strengthening community access to justice, community policing and effective sexual and gender-based violence response; and 3) Young women and men as stakeholders in ensuring peaceful democratic processes and advocates for the prevention of violence and hate speech.

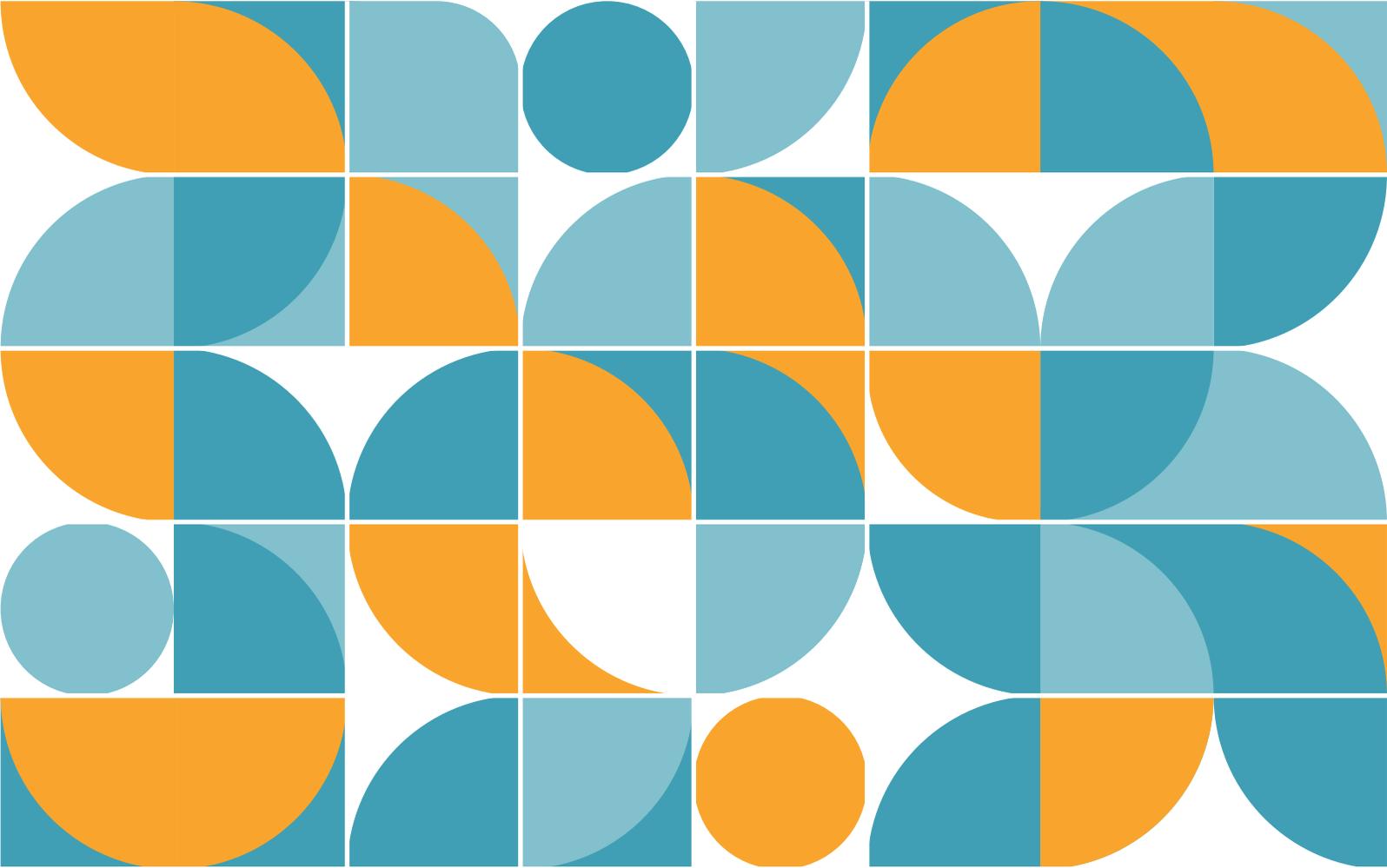
Communication and visibility

In 2020, the UNFPA Country Office strengthened its communication and visibility efforts by enhancing consistent information sharing through its existing platforms. On social media, accounts received increased traction with 427,892 impressions recorded on Facebook and 724,300 impressions on Twitter. There were 1,220 new Twitter followers.

Through publishing human interest stories, the Country Office was able to drive traffic to its website. During the course of the year, nine human interest stories were published in addition to news articles, documents, statements and press releases. Some of the stories published on the website received the attention of international news agencies and were reposted by CNBC Africa, CNN Africa, the Washington Post and Le Monde. As such, the Country Office website recorded 7,950 unique visits in the year.

As part of supporting communications efforts around COVID-19, the Country Office produced print and audio-visual information material to enhance risk communication and community engagement. The material produced include posters, billboards and video messages from National Assembly members and religious leaders calling for observance of COVID-19 preventive measures to curb the spread of the virus. Similarly, in order to leverage the potential for maximized reach of mass media platforms and their role in information dissemination to UNFPA's constituents during the pandemic, the Country Office produced TV and radio spots on COVID-19 and pregnancy and breastfeeding as well as GBV and COVID-19. These spots were aired in 912 radio and TV airtime slots in major TV stations and selected community radio stations across the country.





CHAPTER FIVE

Project Reports

actiVista



INCLUSIVITY, PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

#GMBYouth4Peace #GMBWomen4Peace

UN Peacebuilding Support

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is the organization's financial instrument of first resort to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. The Fund may invest with United Nations entities, governments, regional organizations, multilateral banks, national multi-donor trust funds or civil society organizations. The Fund works across pillars and supports integrated UN responses to fill critical gaps; respond quickly and with flexibility to peacebuilding opportunities; and catalyse

processes and resources in a risk-tolerant fashion. The PBF was an early responder to the transition priorities in The Gambia. Following the declaration of the country's eligibility to the PBF in September 2018, PBF support has helped catalyse critical peacebuilding processes in a very short period. Focusing on women and youth under the PBF, UNFPA secured funding of \$2.16 million for three new projects and a cost extension on an existing project in 2020:

Strengthening community access to justice, community policing and effective SGBV response

Under this 24-month project, UNFPA in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF seeks to improve public confidence, address citizen's frustration with justice service delivery and take the initial steps towards building resilient rule of law institutions, community policing, and providing effective GBV response as sustainable interventions that will bring justice closer to the citizen. UNFPA in line with its mandate achieved the following results in 2020 in support of addressing GBV and GBV case management.

Results

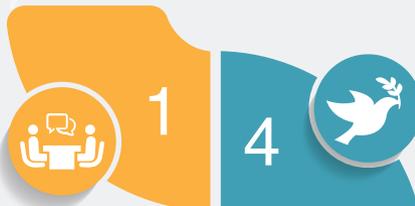


Strengthening community coping mechanisms against risks of climate induced conflicts and to minimize gender-related vulnerabilities and tensions in The Gambia

The project is aimed at addressing climate change-induced conflict and tensions in target communities by supporting community-driven mitigation and adaptation strategies and approaches. The project is working on putting in place coping mechanisms for the most vulnerable, especially women and young persons who are often the most affected by climate change-induced conflict. The project achieved the following results in 2020.

Results

100 women farmers trained on climate change and advocacy held in three regions: CRR, URR and NBR



19 women farmers networks established and trained on climate-related vulnerabilities

360 mother's club members trained as advocates of menstrual health and hygiene management including community acceptance of reusable sanitary pads for girls



Needs assessment of communities affected by climate change and conflict carried out in collaboration with ITC and the World Food Programme in NBR, CRR and URR

150 community monitors, traditional leaders and members of community-based organizations trained on climate related vulnerabilities



Strengthening sustainable and holistic reintegration of returnee migrants

The Gambia represents a country of origin, transit and destination for increasing numbers of domestic and international migrants. For the sustainability of peace and stability, it is important to have appropriate measures in place to successfully reintegrate young Gambian returnees who have for the most part suffered abuse and face stigma in reintegrating into the larger society. The returnee migrant project that commenced in December 2018 for an initial period of 18 months was extended in 2020 for another 15 months. The second phase of the project aims to specifically strengthen community structures to better facilitate reintegration in communities that have been affected by an influx of returnees resettling back to The Gambia, and to strengthen the provision of protection, mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) through a socially inclusive approach for peacebuilding. The project achieved the following results in 2020:

Results

2,780

community members were engaged in dialogue sessions in fostering social cohesion and reintegration of returnee

80

youths including returnees trained as trainers on national surveillance and contact tracing

3,300

youths including returnees engaged through 24 Social events aimed at fostering shared learning and integration



Development of a peacebuilding trainer's manual early warning peace building paradigms and dispute resolution mechanisms in order to standardize training on peacebuilding

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



Community
engagements to
strengthen holistic
reintegration of
returnee migrants



#EndGBV



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

Website: gambia.unfpa.org

Facebook: UNFPA The Gambia

Twitter: @UNFPATheGambia

Instagram: @unfpa_thegambia

Youtube: UNFPA The Gambia