



**UNFPA GHANA PROGRAMME REPORT 2018**

**ENGAGING WITH THE  
FIRST LADY... TO HELP GIRLS  
REALIZE THEIR DREAMS**



## **UNFPA Ghana** Programme Report 2018

# **Engaging with the First Lady... To Help Girls Realize Their Dreams.**

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### Engaging with the First Lady... To Help Girls Realize Their Dreams

#### ● Overview:

**A**chieving a better and safer world for women and girls is a significant aspect of UNFPA's activities. Strengthening the organization's capacity to undertake this advocacy is a fundamental task which requires a multi-stakeholder approach. To achieve these outcomes, UNFPA partners with the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana, Her Excellency Rebecca Akufo-Addo.

UNFPA has intensified efforts to unite relevant local and international partners in order to collaborate and achieve its transformative goals. UNFPA's partnership with the Office of the First Lady enables the organization to secure the commitment of state institutions and ease policy implementations. This collaboration contributes directly toward two of the organization's transformative goals: zero preventable maternal deaths and zero unmet needs for family planning. These two goals impact and contribute indirectly toward the third goal: ensuring zero sexual and gender-based violence. In February 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, visited Ghana. She focused on the fact that the degree a country is willing to invest in developmental goals through political commitment and resources determines the ability to reach the SDG 2030. Accompanied by Niyi Ojuolape and members of the country office, Ms. Wickramanayake met with Kayayei girls in the Agbogbloshie Market. During her visit, she stressed that every nation must maintain a strong focus on young women and girls who face discrimination and exclusion.

In light of the above, the collaborative effort between UNFPA Ghana and the Office of the First Lady is of strategic and practical importance. During 2018, the partnership carried out four major initiatives:

- **Celebrating 2018 International Women's Day**
- **International Day of Preeclampsia**
- **The second Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage**
- **"Because I Want To Be . . ." Initiative (in cooperation with The Rebecca Foundation)**

These initiatives and constructive engagements contribute to the reduction of the school dropout rate for women and girls, and provide education regarding their sexual and reproductive rights, achieving zero sexual and gender-based violence.



## CELEBRATING 2018 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**G**hana celebrated the 2018 International Women's Day (IWD) with a commemoration program organized by the Office of the First Lady and UNFPA. Held on the 8th of March every year, the International Women's Day is set aside by the United Nations (UN) to acknowledge the enormous contribution of women to the achievement of better livelihoods for humanity. It is also an occasion to reflect on the lingering injustices of violence, sexual exploitation, and discrimination against women. The theme of the 2018 celebration was "Women Too: Press to Progress as Game Changers." In her opening remarks, the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana, HE Rebecca Akufo-Addo, encouraged prominent female and male Ghanaian voices to champion education for girls and women as a means of improving gender parity in Ghana, an important step toward sustainable national development.

The First Lady pointed out that Ghana has all the policies, laws, knowledge, and tools to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. However, to achieve the desired results, action and urgent commitment is needed from the government down to cultural institutions and religious gatekeepers.

The First Lady highlighted several women's issues of pressing importance in society today. She discussed the invaluable role of education as a means of pressing for progress in gender parity. Such progress would translate into improved access to education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels.



She also announced a strategic partnership between her office and UNFPA, working together to deploy community-led strategies that address the phenomenon of female school dropouts, especially in the poorest communities.

During a panel discussion, the UNFPA Representative, Mr. Niyi Ojuolape, stated that adolescent girls in Ghana deserve particular attention because they are at the heart of population growth and development dynamics in West and Central Africa. According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana, women make up 51% of Ghana's population, with adolescent girls accounting for 21.7%. This statistic deserves careful reflection, as young girls and women whose lives are derailed in adolescence are not able to realize their potential due to lack of education, early pregnancy, child marriage, etc. As a result, they lack the capacity to contribute to society in a meaningful way. For this reason, UNFPA and The Rebecca Foundation worked hand in hand to implement the "Because I Want To Be . . ." initiative. The focus of the program is to ensure that all teenage mothers have the opportunity to return to school, and at the same time, defines strategies to retain those already in school and help them advance to the tertiary educational level. Through his panel presentation, the UNFPA Representative informed the audience that the heart of UNFPA's work has always been addressing inequalities and discrimination. Through such programs, UNFPA ensures that the lives of excluded and marginalized women and girls are improved and that no one is left behind.

Over 200 dignitaries attended the function, including Ghana's Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection Ms. Otiko Djabah, the wife of the Vice-President Mrs. Samira Bawumia, former First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, former First Lady Mrs. Fulera Liman, former Second Lady Hajia Ramatu Mahama, UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Christine Evans-Klock, and members of the diplomatic community. Other attendees included Queen Mothers, female members of parliament (MPs) and ministers of state, female politicians, academics, actresses, female students from the tertiary institutions, and representatives of professional women's groups and market women.



## WORLD PREECLAMPSIA DAY

On May 22, 2018, UNFPA Ghana, in cooperation with the Ghana Action on Preeclampsia (*GHAPEC*), the sole preeclampsia advocacy agency in Ghana, engaged the Office of the First Lady to mark the inaugural World Preeclampsia Day in Ghana. The celebration took place at the plush Greater Accra Regional Hospital (Ridge Hospital) under the theme “Preeclampsia: Be Prepared Before Lightning Strikes.”

At the launch, Her Excellency Rebecca Akufo-Addo called for increased awareness and action on the topical health issue of preeclampsia. An obstetric complication, preeclampsia is characterized by high blood pressure, passing protein in urine, swelling of the feet as well as multiple organ damage, most often in the liver and kidneys. The condition usually begins after twenty weeks of pregnancy in women, and even those whose blood pressure had previously been normal could be at risk. Other symptoms may include nausea or vomiting, decreased urine output, shortness of breath caused by fluid in the lungs, severe headaches, changes in vision, and upper abdominal pain, usually under the ribs on the right side. Preeclampsia may develop without some or most of the stated symptoms. In the year 2017, out of 6,692 women who delivered in the Greater Accra Regional hospital, 843 of them representing 12.6% suffered from pre-eclampsia with a case fatality of 1.2%.



Her Excellency highlighted these statistics to stress the fact that preeclampsia and eclampsia are becoming the leading cause of maternal mortality in Ghana. She decried the unavailability of essential medicines and equipment in some Ghanaian facilities to help avert these needless and preventable deaths.

She advised pregnant mothers to consistently seek pre-natal care and entreated health workers to stress education in preeclampsia and other conditions that lead to the unacceptable rate of maternal deaths in Ghana. Hospital staff and several dignitaries, including Niyi Ojuolape, UNFPA Representative in Ghana, along with other staff members, attended the launch.



*H.E. seated with dignitaries at the High Table*



## OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY PARTNERS WITH UNFPA TO HOST THE SECOND GIRLS SUMMIT ON ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

The commitment to eliminating child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Ghana received a major boost of support from the Office of the First Lady, Her Excellency Rebecca Akufo-Addo, at the second Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriage. As one of the core themes within UNFPA's sphere of intervention, UNFPA Ghana partnered with the Office of the First Lady in the successful organization of the event.



***H.E. Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo delivering an address during the event***

The two-day summit was held from November 24, 2018. Organized by the African Union (AU) under the theme “Enough of the Silence,” the summit provided an ample arena to involve relevant stakeholders and institutions in a deeper commitment toward actionable policies to end child marriage. Apart from UNFPA, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, in partnership with Plan Ghana and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), also partnered with the Office of the First Lady for the event.



UNFPA Representative, Niyi Ojuolape and First Lady of Ghana, Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo with DJ Switch

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the First Lady of Ghana, Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo, said that *the high-level gathering is a clear indication of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of girls and young people and the importance attached to issues affecting them. She stressed the fact that girls who are married off at an early age suffer not only emotionally but also psychologically and physically.*

According to national statistics, four out of ten girls in Africa are married off before the age of eighteen. In Ghana, the national average of girls in this category is twenty-one percent.

***“We all know the challenges, sometimes tragic, that come as a result of child marriage and female genital mutilation. Child brides and girls who have been circumcised have a higher mortality rate from complications of child birth and are at an extremely high risk of developing obstetric fistula,”*** she stated.

The First Lady stated that Ghana had fully committed to implementing its ten-year strategic plan, Ending Child Marriage. Launched in 2016, the two-year operational plan aims to ensure youthful livelihood and socio-economic transformation by 2030. Empowering girls, Mrs. Akufo-Addo said, allows them to become better positioned to contribute to national development.

Ms. Amira El Fadil, the Commissioner of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC), emphasized that ending child marriage is a priority of the AU and recognizes it as a developmental, cultural, political, health, and religious issue which must be addressed. She highlighted the fact that the AU launched a campaign to end child marriage in 2014, which was adopted by twenty-four member states.



UNFPA Rep, Mr. Niyi Ojuolape (far right) during a panel discussion at the event

## LAUNCH OF "BECAUSE I WANT TO BE . . ."



*UNFPA Rep interacts with First Lady at the function*

**O**n December 11, 2018, UNFPA and the Office of the First Lady launched its third joint initiative, the "Because I Want To Be . . ." program, rolled out in the Accra Metropolis. This initiative, spearheaded by The Rebecca Foundation with support from UNFPA, seeks to ensure that girls who drop out of school for whatever reason, are assisted in returning to continue their education. It also aims to ensure that girls who are in school but are at risk of dropping out, are given support to remain in school. Those who may be unable to go back to school are given assistance in acquiring an income-generating skill, ensuring that continuous education and empowerment of the female child remains the focus. The initiative provides an added impetus to implement local strategies in support of SDG4, Sustainable Development Goal Number Four. The goal seeks to achieve quality education for the female child, in line with UNFPA's mandate to see every young person's potential fulfilled. Further, the initiative will use a mentorship empowerment model to ensure the continuous education of girls in order to achieve a comprehensive set of social, human, and economic welfare.

***"Because I Want To Be . . ." is a three-year project to be implemented in nine communities in six metropolitan municipalities and districts in the coastal belt of the greater Accra region.***

Launching the project in the Accra Metropolis, specifically Jamestown, Bukom, and Chorkor, HE Rebecca Akufo-Addo spoke of the high school dropout rate of young girls along with teenage pregnancy as alarming and a huge cause for concern.



*Teenage Mothers seeking further information at the programme*



*Motherhood in Childhood*

She called on parents, elders, and traditional authorities to work alongside the "Because I Want To Be . . ." initiative and assume greater responsibility for the welfare of girls and young women in their respective communities.

UNFPA considers the initiative an important step toward the attainment of Agenda 2030 and its commitment to leave no one behind, ensuring an end to limiting the aspirations of young girls and providing a path to a better and brighter future.

Approximately two thousand participants attended the event including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Directors from Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Social Welfare Department, Ghana Health Service, teachers, pupils, students, chiefs, Queen Mothers, and religious and traditional leaders. Large numbers of members of the media and general public were also in attendance. Question and answer sessions were held. Members of the public, including teenage mothers, sought clarification on how the initiative would be piloted and the various ways it would address their needs.



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