



UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential fulfilled.

UNFPA works towards three transformative and people-centred results.

They are:

- Ending preventable maternal deaths
- Ending the unmet need for family planning
- Ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

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FOREWORD

On the occasion of the twin anniversary celebrations of UNFPA at 50 and ICPD at 25, UNFPA Ghana is pleased to release this photobook on the plight of vulnerable women known as Kayayei in Ghana. Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, made a promise to focus population programmes on human lives instead of human numbers. The ICPD put emphasis where it should be: improving the lives of individuals and increasing the respect for their human rights; the wellbeing of women, men and young people. Women's rights were recognized as being indispensable to development and thus, was at the center of the agreements reached. This was re-affirmed at the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and in many other international agreements.

UNFPA Ghana has since then worked with the government and other partners to ensure a comprehensive programme of interventions tailored at improving the lives of women and girls, particularly the vulnerable ones such as the Kayayei. Kayayei is a phenomenon involving women and girls aged between 10 and 35 years who migrate mainly from northern parts of Ghana to market centers in Accra, and other large cities where they work as head porters. Some of these girls are in search of better livelihood opportunities while others escape from harmful practices, gender-based violence and ethnic or family conflicts.

However, as it stands, the Kayayei peculiarity seems to be worsening as more and more girls, with some as young as nine years, are found in this playing arena despite Ghana's law of compulsory basic education. What are we not doing right? Do we have shared responsibilities of care and nurturing children and maintenance of households? Where are we with women facing threats to their lives, health and wellbeing as a result of being overburdened with work and lack of power and influence, as stipulated in the Programme of Action? Are we not leaving some people behind?

While we re-commit ourselves again at the 2019 Nairobi Summit, I wish to remind everyone that it remains our collective responsibility to continue the unfinished business in pursuit of rights and choices for ALL. The journey is not ended, we still have a very long way to go and will have to re-double our efforts.

Niyi Ojuolape
Resident Representative
United Nations Population Fund, Ghana

WHO ARE THE KAKAYEI?

Across all major markets in Ghana, you will spot Kayayei or female head porters. These groups of adolescent girls or young women, ranging from age 12 to 35, carry goods and wares on their head in large aluminum pans. Most Kayayei migrate down, predominantly from the Northern and Upper West Regions, to Southern Ghana in attempt to escape poverty and other harmful practices such as child and forced marriages and female genital mutilation by working in this informal sector.

In crowded and congested areas with limited vehicle access, Kayayei make important contributions to the economic development of markets. They play an important role in transporting goods such as yam, plantain, vegetables, fish, clothes, etc.

These resilient, resourceful women weave new family ties within each other while living and working in harsh conditions. They often stick together with other head porters who are also from their hometown for support and survival and in some cases, the role of kayayei transcends from one generation to the next.

Some stay a short time as head porters, working only during the “lean” agricultural seasons. Others spend years working as Kayayei to save up for their dowry, support their families and contribute to the welfare of their communities back home. New trends show that some of the girls also migrate to work and safe in order to return to school.

In a 20189 mapping exercise by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social protection (MOGCSP), it was indicated suggested that there are more than 100.000 Kayayei, including their children, nationwide, with 85,600 working in the Greater Accra Area, 22,500 in the Ashanti Region and about 1000 in the Brong Ahafo Region. The mapping was supported technically and financially financed by UNFPA with technical sup- port also from Purim African Youth Development Platform (PAYDP). These numbers are approximated and it is likely that they are more in number.



Bukari Zeinabu

I'm Bukari Zeinabu. I'm 19 years old with a 1 year old son. I migrated from Loagri in the North East region 6 months ago. I came because there was no work in my village. Even though my husband works on the farm, the money he makes is not enough to cater for myself and the baby. My challenges have to do with sleeping outside with the baby and carrying heavy loads with the baby for meager pay. My son is mostly sick but all I can afford is the drug store. I hope to be a Kente weaver in my village after I have gathered enough money.

POVERTY AND HARDSHIP



Many kayayei face a situation of poverty and hardship as headporters in the markets. To survive they work long hours carrying heavy loads in the sun. Because Kayayei have no job security and no written contracts, they are forced to negotiate the fee for every job, which makes them vulnerable to conflicts and abuse and exploitation. Most girls earn an average income of 20-50 cedis per day, approximately 4-10 USD



Rashida Abdulai

My name is Rashida Abdulai. I'm 19 years old, from Loagri in the North East Region. I came to Accra in 2017 after completing Senior High School. I aspire to be a lawyer so I'm saving money to re-write some subjects I didn't do too well in. We always fight verbally and physically with the market women after they assault us. Our money and belongings are not safe since we sleep outside. Fortunately, I have been a beneficiary of the livelihood empowerment skills for selected Kayayei, supported by the UNFPA Child Marriage Programme. I have therefore started making savings I have to save on mobile money in order to go back to school. Such programmes when expanded, will support more Kayayei girls. as all other girls do.



Abdulai Asana

Abdulai Asana is my name. I came to Accra 6 months ago. My greatest challenge is sleeping in the open and carrying heavy loads in the sun. I want to continue my education and be a nurse. This is the reason why I came to Accra. I'm working very hard to make my dream a reality.



Kayayei having discussions with gate-keepers in between jobs



Yidana Alia

I am 19 years old. Difficult financial conditions in the North led me to become a Kayayei in Accra in 2017 so I could make money to continue schooling. Luckily for me, I was recruited to be a peer educator; I became more empowered after the training. Now, I am able to speak for myself and other vulnerable girls when the need arises. I also speak to people around me about the effects of child marriage. I have been trained in soap making, which is a skill I intend to use when I go back to Loagri. Although I had to rewrite two papers because I didn't do well, I know with my ambition, I will succeed.



HARSH LIVING CONDITIONS

The kayayei girls women are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They suffer from lack of access to safe housing, sanitation and cooking facilities. They are also intensely susceptible to theft, gender based violence and rape. Many become pregnant and lack facilities for their children in the markets.



Safia Dahamani

I'm 18 years old. I came to Accra in 2017 but was robbed after a week in Accra so now I save my earnings on mobile money. I still recollect how my sister was nearly raped one night while we slept. I was approached by PAYDP during a recruitment exercise in the market in 2018. After livelihood skills training, I was selected to be a part of Peer Educators training. This training was timely as it changed the timid me into a more outspoken girl. Because I'm a peer educator, I've been able to educate people on the dangers of child marriage and other forms of gender -based violence. I want to be a nurse but I have to better my grades in some of the courses. I'm ready to go back to school to rewrite the subjects I failed. In order to follow this dream, I'll continue to endure the harsh conditions of the south knowing that the future is bright.





Naima Bukari



Musah Kubura

I'm 19 years old and I come from Loagri in the North East region of Ghana. I came to Accra in 2017 after my WASSCE. I came because I wanted to make enough money to cater for myself and my family. I've had challenges in Accra and wish that support will be provided to alleviate some of the challenges by government and other stakeholders. but I'm enduring. We sleep outside. Due to this our money and phones are usually stolen. We are usually physically and verbally assaulted by the market women. We always get into fights with these market women. My dream is to be a soldier. I see this materializing. although I don't know how.

RISK OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE VOILENCE AND ABUSE

Most Kayayei sleep outside in the markets and they are especially vulnerable due to the lack of protection and safe sleeping quarters at night. Due to their vulnerability as adolescent girls without any form of protection, they are subjected to all forms of sexual and gender based violence including defilement, rape and battery, especially because most of them co-habit with partners.











Kayayei women wait to use washing and storing facilities.





Gatekeepers are the first point of contact for anyone wishing to support or mobilize the Kayayei in the various markets. Although they are presumed to provide some form of safety for the girls, the security they provide is often inadequate, as the Kayayei are vulnerable to assaults, thefts and Gender Based Violence. Gatekeepers also sporadically collect financial support from organizations or individuals wishing to contribute to the welfare of the Kayayei.





Waiting for day to break

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND SERVICES SOCIAL PROTECTION & SUPPORT



SECURING ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In collaboration with Ghana Health Service and the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), UNFPA conducts regular reproductive health clinics at the various markets where the organization supports partners to work with the Kayayei, Tema Station Market for both married and unmarried Kayayei. This is due to the fact that, there are high rates of adolescent pregnancies among these marginalized girls as well as prevalence of STIs. The services include information and counselling advice on sexual and reproductive health issues, including HIV prevention and the provision of free family planning. Methods offered range from male and female condoms to contraceptive pills, injectables and long lasting methods such as implants, which last from 3 months to 2 years. Apart from individual counselling, the outreach clinics organize group discussions and health talks with the support of Kayayei peer educators. Outreach services are often scheduled for Sundays in order to allow the Kayayei time to attend. Securing access to sexual and reproductive health is an important part of the support that UNFPA offers to the Kayayei.



Peer educator demonstrating how to put on a condom



Consultation for kayayei at Tema Station



CHIEF JUSTICE MENTORING PROGRAMME

Since 2014, as a part of the Kayayeï Girls' Empowerment Initiative, UNFPA has partnered with the Chief Justice's annual mentoring programme for young people, to include vulnerable girls such as the Kayayeï. This program aims to empower young people to develop interest in the legal profession and the inclusion of the Kayayeï is to ensure that, they are encouraged to develop high aspirations and go on to develop their full potentials, in spite of their vulnerability. The Kayayeï women through skills training, developing legal literacy and increasing their access to rights-based integrated sexuality education. This mentorship initiative has given the Kayayeï the opportunity to interact with Chief Justice and the judiciary as well as provide exposure to the judiciary judicial and administrative system of justice functions in Ghana. It also served as a platform for them to interact with other in-school youth, providing an integrative approach to girls' education and empowerment. So far, over 150 Kayayeï have been benefactors of the Chief Justice Programme as part of this UNFPA supported endeavor.



LIVELIHOOD AND SKILLS TRAINING

In collaboration with NGOs such as Purim African Youth Development Platform(PAYDP), Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana(PPAG) and Society for Women and AIDs in Af- rica (SWAA), UNFPA supports the Kayayei in skills training in topics such as legal literacy, livelihood skills ,sexual and reproductive health, financial literacy and other rights centered pro- grams. Some of the livelihood skills including include soap making, tie and die fabric production, root and tuber processing tailoring and bead work with slippers and purses. Through partnering with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), we have successfully trained about 200 Kayayei have been trained in root and tuber processing, cereal mixing and confectionery. Some of these young women have progressed to enroll in cooperatives and even received financial and business management support. The purpose of the UNFPA skills training is to empower the Kayayei women with tools needed to improve their economic status. Two business and SRH centres in have been set up in Kumasi and Techiman and a third is being established in Accra to serve as enterprise development resources for the Kayayei to produce and market Kayayei products as well as offer sexual and reproductive health services to visiting adolescent girls.

FUTURE FIRST ACADEMY

FOUNDED BY KAYAYEI YOUTH ASSOCIATION



NURSERY - PRIMARY 6

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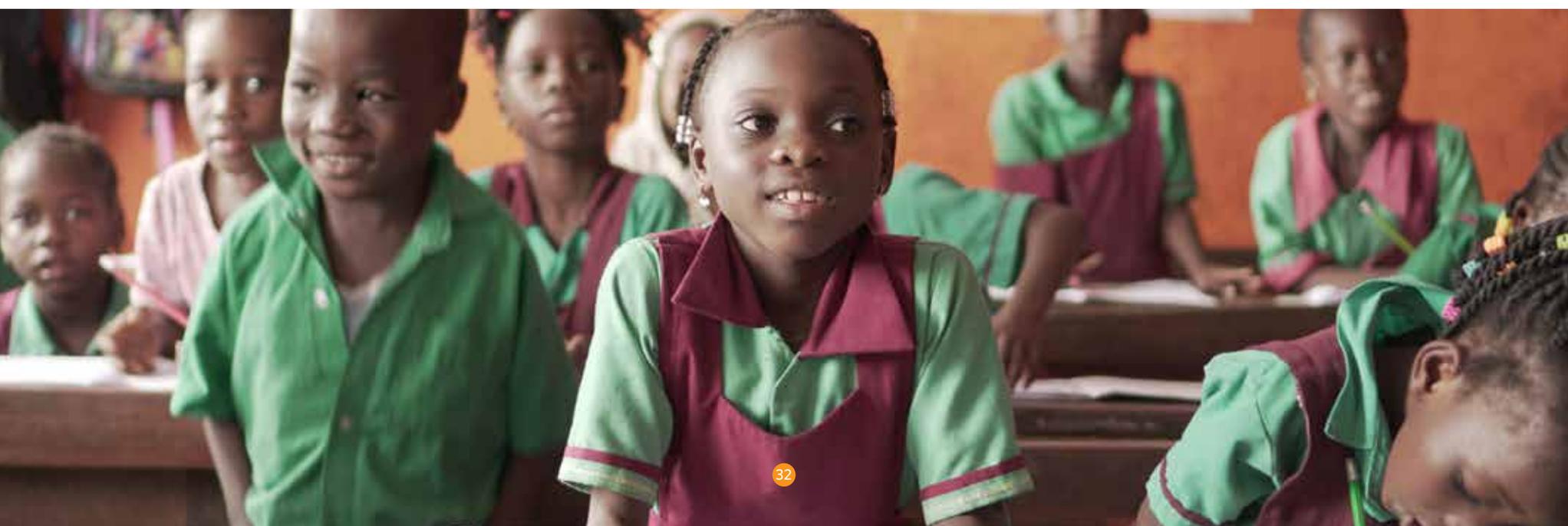
... because everyone counts



The Future First Academy School, which educates up to 250 Kayayei children of Agbogbloshie Agboloshi market from nursery to primary 6, was established by the Kayayei Youth Association National Association for the Kayayei in 2004 2012. Since then, the building has fallen into disrepair. To improve conditions for the Kayayei children, UNFPA in 2018 completed a total renovation of the building and its facilities, as well as supplied much needed learning materials. However, the Kayayei children are still in dire need for the establishment of schools and safe drop off places at all the major markets. For Kayayei, keeping their children safe and in school is an overbearing challenge and yet another heavy load to carry.











UNFPA believes that the Kayayei can play an important role in economic and social development in their communities. Given the right support, they can act as role models and game changers, advocating for: the rights of girls and women, the need to eliminate child marriage and harmful practices, Gender Based Violence and Re-productive health issues.

Our experience working with this vulnerable yet resilient population of young women show that many Kayayei, over the years, have been able to either start a trade or business, go back to school or improve the socioeconomic status and standard of living for themselves and their families back home. With over 100,000 Kayayei nationwide, increased support is needed to ensure these young women are empowered and equipped to overcome their current challenges and contribute to their communities and country.



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