



Ghana Country Office

# ORANGE VIBES

## TRIENNIAL NEWSLETTER

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# UNFPA OBSERVES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FGM IN PUSIGA, UPPER EAST REGION



*Participants at the observation of the 2023 International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).*

According to estimates, 4.3 million girls across the world are at the risk of female genital mutilation (FGM). And every year on February 6, the world recognizes the need to end this inhumane practice that threatens the rights, dignity and wellbeing of victims who undergo FGM. In Ghana, although the practice has been outlawed, it continues clandestinely.

The COVID-19 pandemic also re-ignited the practice of FGM in a few areas in Ghana, particularly, the Upper Est region where some families were known to subject their daughters to FGM through cross-border movements to Burkina Faso and Togo which borders Ghana in the North-eastern part of the country.

This year's International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation was held under the theme: "Partnership with Men and Boys to Transform Social and Gender Norms to End FGM", which the UNFPA Ghana Country Office saw as an opportunity to hold an Intergenerational Dialogue between Traditional Leaders and young people, notable, men and boys who stood a chance to ensure an end to FGM given their ability to take many decisions at the household level mainly in the rural areas.



*Dr. Ochan making a statement on the 2023 International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM in Pusiga, Upper East Region.*

Speaking at the ceremony which took place at the Assembly Hall of the Gbewaa College of Education in Pusiga, the UNFPA Country Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan noted that, 'while there has been a significant decrease in the practice of FGM from previous years, it still continues and is deeply entrenched in certain cultures.'

Dr. Ochan referred to a 2019 study by the Navrongo Health Research Institute which revealed FGM prevalence levels of 82% and 62% respectively for Pusiga district and Bawku Municipal. Stakeholders present, including representatives from the Department of Gender of the Upper East Regional Coordinating Council, teachers, school pupils, chiefs and male advocates, were encouraged to work together to end FGM in Ghana. he also called for new data to understand the current prevalence and drivers of FGM in the targeted communities.

The DCE of Pusiga District, Hon. Zubeiru Abdulai decried the practice of FGM in the area and called for concerted efforts to nip the harmful practice in the bud. Chiefs from various communities who gathered for the event pledged to protect girls from getting cut while calling on UNFPA to work with authorities in neighbouring communities in Burkina Faso and Togo to stop the practice.

The Ambassador of Norway to Ghana, Her Excellency Ingrid Mollestad joined in the observation of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM and added her voice to advocate for an end to FGM and the empowerment of women and girls. The Government of Norway supports UNFPA globally to promote access to sexual and reproductive health services, end female genital mutilation, provide reproductive health education to young people as well as, eliminate sexual & gender-based violence.



*A section of participants at the observation of the 2023 International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM in Pusiga.*



# EMBRACE CULTURAL PRACTICES THAT RESPECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS – NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR ADVISES



*Norwegian Ambassador to Ghana, Her Excellency Ingrid Mollestad and some school girls in Pusiga.*



*The Norwegian Ambassador to Ghana, Her Excellency Ingrid Mollestad making an address during the observation of the 2023 International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM.*

As part of the celebration of this year's International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by UNFPA Ghana and its partners at Pusiga in the Upper East Region of Ghana, the Norwegian Ambassador to Ghana, Her Excellency Ingrid Mollestad admonished community chiefs to eschew harmful cultural practices which undermine the rights and wellbeing of women and girls.

She made this call while addressing the chiefs, young male advocates, officials of the Department of Gender of the Upper East Regional Coordinating Council, officials of NGOs, as well as schoolchildren and some survivors of FGM. She stated, "We must promote and embrace cultural and religious practices that are promoting and are respectful of women's rights." She made this point to emphasize the fact that positive aspects of culture should be embraced while the harmful ones should be done away with.

She added that, "...neither religion nor cultural traditions should be used as excuses for denying girls and women their human rights", as the practice of FGM was usually justified by those who practised it with cultural beliefs.

This year's International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation was held under the theme: "Partnership with Men and Boys to Transform Social and Gender Norms to End FGM."



# BRIDGING THE GENDER EQUALITY GAP IN LABOUR: UNFPA AND PRADA LEADING THE WAY



*Some beneficiaries of the UNFPA-PRADA Project, "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears"*

In partnership with the PRADA Group, UNFPA has donated machinery to beneficiaries under the "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears" project. The equipment was handed over to beneficiaries at the Ussher Hospital in Accra. The project which was launched in 2022 aims at promoting gender equality, women empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in a 6-month training programme for young women in Ghana and Kenya.

So far, the project has equipped participants with knowledge and practical skills relevant to the fashion industry and facilitated internships with local fashion companies to establish long-term work opportunities for the women enrolled in the project.



*A specimen of the equipment provided to the beneficiaries under the UNFPA-PRADA project, named: "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears"*

Head of the Gender Unit at UNFPA Ghana, Doris Mawuse Aglobitse Ph.D, who presented the items on behalf of the UNFPA Ghana Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan, expressed the commitment of UNFPA to empowering women and bridging the gender equality gap in labour.

Harriet Hudson-Ghartey, who received the items on behalf of the hospital, commended UNFPA and the PRADA Group for their support. She went on to admonish parents and the beneficiaries not to demean the fashion design profession.



*Doris Aglobitse, PhD., presenting the items to the Ussher Hospital for use by the beneficiaries of the "Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears" Project.*

At the climax of the project, PRADA will award a full scholarship package to a girl from either Ghana or Kenya who distinguishes herself creditably to New York. UNFPA and PRADA are delighted to work with the young women to improve their agency and continue to work towards sustainable development solutions.



*A section of guests at the ceremony for the handing over of the fashion design equipment.*



# WOMEN'S MONTH: UNFPA JOINS PARTNERS FOR 2023 "AMBASSADOR FOR A DAY" COMPETITION



*The Ambassadors and mentors in a group photograph with the adolescent girls.*

As part of this year's celebration of International Women's Day, coupled with the need to empower adolescent girls to make a successful transition into womanhood, the British High Commission Accra, UNFPA and other partners awarded young girls in the "Ambassador for a Day" competition at an event in Accra.

Welcoming guest to the event, the UK High Commissioner to Ghana, H. E Harriet Thompson acknowledged the role partners including UNFPA, PAYDP, CAMFED, Plan International Ghana and the various embassies played to facilitate the mentorship of young girls as a way of empowering them to pursue worthy careers.

Dignitaries who graced the event include the ambassadors of France, Switzerland, and Norway: His Excellency Jules-Armand Aniambossou, Her Excellency Simone Giger and Her Excellency Ingrid Mollestad, respectively. In a short address, H. E. Ingrid Mollestad encouraged the young girls who participated in the competition to make the most of the opportunity as it presented a privilege for them to identify their future careers and work towards its fulfilment.

H.E. Jules-Armand Aniambossou expressed his interest in the initiative, recognizing it as an effective tool for empowering young girls. 'The Government of France is committed to making gender equality a reality by empowering women', he echoed.

On her part, the Swiss Ambassador to Ghana, H. E Simone Giger, iterated her willingness to collaborate with all the partners in empowering women and girls towards the attainment of gender equality.

The UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana, Mr. Charles Abani appreciated the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for their involvement in the "Ambassador for a Day" Initiative which he believed complimented country level initiatives that empowers women and young people.

Mr. Abani equally lauded the partners for putting the initiative together, while highlighting the role played by development partners like UNFPA and UNICEF, towards ending child marriage in Ghana, which is one of the inhibitors to the achievement of gender equality.

The event was also comprised of a mentorship session for girls which allowed them to learn from ambassadors at close quarters. Certificates were presented to the award winners of the "Ambassador for a Day" competition.



*H.E. Harriet Thompson presenting a certificate to one of the award winners, Wilhelmina Larweh.*



*A section of participants at the 2023 "Ambassador for a Day" competition.*



# UNFPA UPGRADES WAREHOUSE FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTH COMMODITIES IN BONO EAST REGION



*Dignitaries at the ceremony symbolically handing over the upgraded medical warehouse/store to the Bono East Regional Directorate of GHS.*

In a bid to improve healthcare delivery in Ghana, particularly access to health commodities including reproductive health supplies, UNFPA handed over an upgraded warehouse to the Bono East Regional Health Directorate of the Ghana Health Service in Kintampo.

In a brief ceremony attended by the Bono East Regional Minister, Hon. Kwasi Adu-Gyan, the Director-General of the Ghana Health Service (GHS), Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye, UNFPA Country Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan, Health Systems Strengthening Team Lead of USAID Ghana, Ms. Elizabeth Williams, medical directors of the Bono East Regional Health Directorate as well traditional rulers within the region.

Speaking at the handing over ceremony, the DG of GHS, Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye commended UNFPA for the support provided in upgrading the facility to be of more functional use to the Bono East Region and other regions who benefit from the supplies from the medical store. He added that, 'the facility provides us with the opportunity to reach the last mile with critical health supplies.'

In his address, the UNFPA Country Representative stated that, "the warehouse is a major investment [that] will live up to its expectation of providing the congenial storage and distribution of essential medical supplies, that is in compliant with and meets the highest prescribed safety, efficiency and customer satisfaction standards."

Dr. Ochan added, "UNFPA remains committed to our mission of reaching the furthest behind first and working together with partners to ensure that every person in this region has access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, and women and girls can access their preferred family planning method of choice when needed".

As part of the ceremony, some physicians, nurses and allied health personnel at the District Hospital used a skit to demonstrate the importance of having adequate and requisite health infrastructure to provide quality healthcare including in emergency situations.



*The UNFPA Country Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan delivering an address at the ceremony.*



*Health personnel at the Kintampo District Hospital demonstrating the importance of health infrastructure for quality healthcare delivery.*



*Director-General of the Ghana Health Service, Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye making a statement at the handing over ceremony.*



*Inspection of the upgraded facility by the UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ochan & Dr. Kuma Aboagye of GHS, looking on is the Bono East Regional Minister, Hon. Kwasi Adu-Gyan.*



# SUPPORTING THE MERCY WOMEN'S CATHOLIC HOSPITAL IN MANKESSIM, CENTRAL REGION, TO END FISTULA



*UNFPA Representative, Dr. Ochan interacting with the Ag. Medical Director of the Fistula Centre, Dr. Silas Amponsah.*

UNFPA presented medical equipment to the Fistula Unit of the Mercy Women's Catholic Hospital in Mankessim for repairing obstetric fistula in women. As a devastating childbirth injury, Obstetric Fistula (OF) causes incontinence of urine and faecal matter

In a brief statement by the UNFPA Country Representative, Dr Wilfred Ochan at the event to donate the items, he highlighted the need for more collaboration to support healthcare provision for OF patients.

Dr. Ochan indicated that UNFPA has been supporting the National Obstetric Fistula Programme in various capacities, including providing financial and technical support for surgical repairs of OF patients, training of surgeons, provision of medical equipment and providing public health education on OF.

'About 1.8 per cent of every 1,000 childbirths lead to fistula but on average, only 100 women are repaired in a year. This is potentially below the number of new cases per year and this calls for surgical campaigns and outreaches to augment routine surgical repairs to clear the backlog of cases', he stressed.

Dr Ochan further called for increased effort to upgrade the skills and expertise of surgeons in fistula repairs so as to reduce the current reported failure rate of 15% after surgery. 'Donating these equipment represents a significant investment in the health and well-being of women and girls living with obstetric fistula.'

A surgeon and a specialist at the hospital, Dr. Joseph Langa Berko, said that fistula repairs are largely successful with a 20 percent failure rate. He explained that the failures may occur due to delayed reporting of cases , severity of the fistula or when the patient is malnourished, in which case they do not heal very well. He however, gave the assurance, that these cases undergo a second surgery to repair their fistula.

Ms Rose Mantey, the acting Nursing Manager of the hospital, indicated that the greatest challenge facing the unit was funding, since, 'fistula repairs which cost about GHC5,500 were offered free of charge to the women. This includes surgery, feeding and two admission in the facility for two weeks.' She added that, 'Currently the hospital has 25 women waiting to be repaired and we call them when we receive donations'.



*Dr. Ochan looking with smiles at a newborn at the Hospital.*



*Dr. Ochan symbolically planting a tree in support of women's health.*



# UNFPA SUPPORTS GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE TO RELEASE 2021 PHC BRIEF ON DIGITAL EXCLUSION IN GHANA



*The Government Statistician, Professor Samuel K. Annie, launching the thematic brief on 'Digital Exclusion in Ghana'.*

The UNFPA Country Office supported the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) for the launch of the thematic brief on 'Digital Exclusion in Ghana'. This forms part of a series of publications being released by GSS following the conduct of the first digital Population and Housing Census of Ghana in 2021.

The exercise was also for the first time conducted with an independent observer mission made up of population experts, demographers and social scientists across Africa, through the support of UNFPA.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE REPORT AS SHARED BY THE GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE**

- 5.1 million persons aged 6 years and older were digitally excluded in the three months before Census Night
  - (A) 2.8 million females
  - (B) 1.6 million girls aged 6 to 17 years
- 8.2. million persons did not use the internet in that three-month period
  - (A) More than 4 million persons of the working age bracket (15 to 60 years)
- Vulnerable populations notably children who have never attended school, the multidimensionally poor, and persons with disabilities are at high risk of digital exclusion
- National digital divide by sex is 2.7 percentage points with wide variations across age groups
- The success of Ghana's digital economy agenda hinges on bridging digital divides



# UNFPA SUPPORTS KNUST WITH MIDWIFERY EQUIPMENT TO END MATERNAL DEATHS



*UNFPA Deputy Representative, Emmily Naphambo, PhD (R) and Vice-Chancellor of KNUST, Professor Rita Akosua Dickson.*

To ensure midwives acquire competency-based training to improve maternal healthcare delivery in Ghana, UNFPA donated midwifery training equipment and tools for the skills lab of the Nursing Department of Midwifery at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST). Estimated at a cost of US\$30,000, the donated equipment included: dilation curettage instruments, tenaculum uterine forceps, delivery trolley, uterine sound, suction machines, adult, baby weighing scales, birth stimulators, digital thermometers, cervical cerclage models, sims vaginal speculum, surgical scissors, examination screens, uterine dilators, among others.

Addressing the media following the presentation of the items, UNFPA Deputy Representative, Emmily Naphambo, PhD, stated that UNFPA and KNUST has had a long relationship with the aim of ensuring quality midwifery education. 'Improving the quality of maternal healthcare forms part of UNFPA's 8th Country Programme with the Government of Ghana. Though Ghana is making strides, there are still alarming levels of maternal deaths, currently at about 308 deaths per 100,000 live births. That is why we must support the advancement of midwifery training', she explained. This donation, she said would go a long way as the KNUST was training staff and skilled personnel to be attending to pregnant women.

The Deputy Representative of UNFPA used the opportunity to pay a courtesy call on the Vice-Chancellor of KNUST, Prof. Rita Akosua Dickson, who said: 'We welcome this support and wish to encourage you to continue this collaboration for top-notch professional training for our midwives and staff, so that our mothers who give life do not end up losing their lives while giving life.'

Dr Daniel Norris Bekoe, the University Relations Officer, KNUST, who received the items, commended UNFPA for the assistance and said they would supplement the skills training of the students for Ghana. He said the working relationship that existed between the University and the UNFPA would continue, adding that, the two institutions were working on curriculum development for Master's and Doctor of Philosophy Programmes in midwifery.

Dr. Bekoe urged other donors to resource the KNUST to acquire state-of-the-art skills laboratories for the training of health personnel. UNFPA has been working with the KNUST for more than 10 years in the provision of quality education for the improvement of midwifery in Ghana. And since the start of the BSc training in midwifery from 2011, more than 900 midwives have graduated from the programme.



*A cross section of some of the midwifery equipment to the Nursing Department of Midwifery at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST)*



# SOCIAL MEDIA

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The Government of Switzerland 🇨🇭 is a strong partner of UNFPA.

They support programmes in strengthening **#SRHR**, gender equality, women and youth empowerment.

UNFPA Ghana Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan met with the Swiss Ambassador to Ghana, Her Excellency Simone Giger to strengthen our partnership.

**#SDGs #ForTheGoodOfGhana** 🇬🇭



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Courtesy Call on Swiss Ambassador to Ghana

**#Partnerships** are essential for advancing the **#ICPD** agenda by building alliances; mobilizing resources, thought leadership and innovation.

We're grateful to Her Excellency **@SBawumia** for welcoming Dr. **@OchanWilfred** and for committing to the empowerment of women and girls.



Courtesy Call on the 2nd Lady of Ghana.

National health systems should deliver all elements of quality sexual and reproductive health services as integral to primary health care and universal health coverage.

**#HealthForAll #ForTheGoodOfGhana** 🇬🇭



**WORLD HEALTH DAY**  
April 7  
**#HealthForAll**

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World Health Day





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