



Ghana Country Office

Orange Vibes

TRIANNUAL NEWSLETTER

January 2024 - April 2024

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STATEMENT FROM THE COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE



Dr. Wilfred Ochan
UNFPA Ghana Rep

This is the first issue of our tri-annual production of the Orange Vibes. In this issues we would like to spotlight the need to invest in developing youth leadership and youth participation in decision-making.

The youth of Ghana are the inheritors and custodians of our world peace and development. We need to invest more in developing their leadership potentials, agency, voices and in creating the space for their meaningful participation in decision-making structures; as members of such bodies and not as outsiders simply to be consulted through decision-making processes while they are left out of the final decision on the governance, politics, polity and policies including resource allocation.

This way, we are ensuring that the policies and financing decisions speak to the needs, interests and aspirations of the youth.

We acknowledge that many initiatives and investments are being made in their education, employment, skilling opportunities and health needs. Equally needed is intentionally investing in youth leadership development that empowers them to competently engage in the decision-making bodies as well as drive peace and development more broadly for the future we want.

In other words, we need to move beyond rhetoric to real action, beyond tokenistic involvement of youth in decision making to intentional and more meaningful participation. This is best summed up by one of UNFPA's cohort V Fellow of the Youth Leadership development programme (YoLe), Jacinta Dzagli who said, "the perspectives and participation of Ghana's youth are not merely a nicety but a necessity."



UNFPA REPRESENTATIVE AND CHIEF JUSTICE DISCUSS ACCESSIBILITY TO LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE MARGINALISED



UNFPA Country Representative, Dr. Wilfred Ochan exchanged ideas with the Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana, Her Ladyship Justice Gertrude Torkornoo on strengthening collaboration between the Judiciary and UNFPA in promoting awareness of and access to legal services.

Their focus was on advancing awareness and facilitating access to legal services, especially for marginalized groups such as women, girls, youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. Recognizing the importance of collaboration, they explored ways to reinforce legal support systems for victims and survivors of gender-based violence, including the harmful practice of child marriage. By joining forces, they aim to strengthen mechanisms that ensure justice and protection for those affected, raising a society where human rights are upheld and respected.

The outcome of the visit resulted in the collaboration between the two offices to establish the Chief Justice Clubs in schools for Persons with Disability and for the vulnerable groups of young women who work as head-potters in markets known as the “kayayei”, as well as out-of-school youth to be equipped with legal literacy. Through this, judges have been attached to the various Justice Clubs in the markets to mentor the ‘kayayei’ and to assist those interested in schooling to return to school while offering alternative career pathways to others.

There was also a discussion to partner in expanding the virtual courts to facilitate access to services to the marginalized while accelerating the roll out of Gender Based Violence courts to all regions.

Over the past three months, 100 “kayayei” have joined the Justice Clubs at various marketplaces like Madina and CMB Markets. Their discussions underscored the shared commitment to promoting equality and justice for all members of society. The discussion was held when Dr. Ochan paid a courtesy visit to the Chief Justice in her office.



“HER VOICE, HER FUTURE: INVESTING IN SURVIVOR-LED MOVEMENTS TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN GHANA”



Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continues to be practiced in Ghana, in the shadows of the great progress made on women empowerment and gender consciousness, and despite the criminalization of the practice in the country since 1994. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a human rights violation and an extreme form of gender discrimination that poses significant health risks and consequences and reflects deep-rooted inequality between women and men. As we commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, the practice of FGM in Ghana demands our immediate attention and united efforts to eradicate it from our communities.

Globally, there are over 200 million girls and women who are survivors of FGM and in 2024, nearly 4.4 million girls - or more than 12,000 each day - are at risk of the practice. In Ghana, a 2023 draft baseline survey report on FGM in Northern Ghana supported by UNFPA and done in partnership with the University of Health and Allied Sciences revealed that 5 per 100 population of female aged 15 – 49 years had undergone FGM in the Kasena-Nankena West and Wa East Districts. Occurrences of FGM are also observed in the Sawla Tuna-Kalba (3 per 100 population of female) and Pusiga (2 per 100 population of females) districts.

The reasons for continuing the practice of FGM operate at individual and family levels, as societal pressure and in some social structures/institutions, and the reasons include the need to control female sexuality, religious beliefs, marriageability, preserving tradition, and misconceptions about the clitoris containing dirt, a worm and causing deaths to mother and child.

The report calls on stakeholders from the community level such as parents, traditional leaders, and religious leaders, as well as at the government level such as Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, and District Assemblies to employ multi-faceted approaches like durbars, radio and television programmes, schools, health facilities, festivals among others, to accelerate the campaign against Female Genital Mutilation.

UNFPA has supported the affected districts to develop district specific action plans against FGM and exploring other partnership modalities to scale up the campaign to end the practice based on the findings it released.



MEDIA REPORTS: 63-YEAR-OLD HIGH PRIEST MARRIES 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL

The news in the media on the customary marriage between Gborbu Wulomo Nuumo Borketey Laweh Tsuru the 33rd, a traditional leader aged 63 and Naa Okromo, aged 15, which was held in Accra as part of the traditional rites that come with his new authority was a subject of discussion in the country.

While the traditional rulers justified the process as a symbolic event that is performed as customs demand, several civil society organizations raised concerns over an act of "betrothment" and/or child marriage which is against the laws of the country.

As a country celebrated globally for being the first to ratify the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1990, it was a classic case to draw the boundaries between values, customs and traditions and that of the legal framework concerning issues of child marriage and other Gender Based Violence acts. It is worthy of note that Article 28 of the 1992 Constitution, Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560), and section 101 of the Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29). *Supra*, note 14. Act 560: Section 14

(1) provides that "A person shall not force a child (a) to be betrothed, (b) to be a subject of dowry transaction, or (c) to be married."

The Children's Act sets 18 years as the minimum age for marriage, and further outlaws any form of child marriage within the jurisdiction. Any person who acts in contravention of these provisions shall be liable to a fine or to a term of imprisonment or to both.

UNFPA YOLE FELLOWS ORGANIZE THE 'SAFE AND HEALTHY SEX PRACTICES' CAMPAIGN



In a bold and innovative move to tackle critical issues surrounding safe sex practices and well-being among young people in Ghana, the UNFPA Youth Leaders (YoLe) Fellows in partnership with Total Family Health Organization (TFHO) and Marie Stopes Ghana (MSG), held a two-day campaign themed "Promoting Safe Sex Practices Among Tertiary Students", in Accra from 13-14 February, 2024.

As the health and reproductive agency of the UN, the campaign's focus was on creating awareness among the youth while helping them change their behaviours, especially about their sexual health. Factors such as unprotected sex and lack of a coherent national programme for education and well-being that incorporate issues of Reproductive Health continue to play a key role in the prevalence of HIV and teenage pregnancy among the youth.

According to the 2022 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), 80% of females between the ages of 15 and 24 had their most recent sex without condoms. Meanwhile 76% of men aged 15 to 49, according to the GDHS report are unaware of their HIV Status. These alarming statistics are evidence of the existing gaps in safe sex practices, which eventually contributes to the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases especially HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies. Ghana has a youthful population with an estimated 57% under 25 years from a population of 3.1 million people. The country recorded an adolescent pregnancy rate of 63 per 1000 live births in 2022 (GDHS) and a 1.7 HIV prevalence rate (15-49).



The YoLe Fellows leveraged the occasion to empower young adults with essential knowledge, skills, and resources to promote responsible sexual behaviour. The campaign was aimed at raising awareness and fostering a culture of informed decision-making and proactive health management among the youth.



UNFPA is working with the Ghana AIDS Commission to develop policy guidelines that will go a long way to mitigate the cases of HIV.

UNFPA also met with the National AIDS Control Programme and the Malaika Foundation on a campaign against HIV targeting young people. More will be reported when the campaigns are launched.



SPORTS FOR DEVELOPMENT: UNFPA PARTICIPATES IN UN/AU/PRIVATE SECTOR CAMPAIGN AT THE 13TH ALL AFRICAN GAMES, ACCRA, GHANA



The UN/AU/Private sectors partnered to host the Youth Pavilion at the 13th African Games held in Accra, Ghana from 4th to 23rd of March 2024.

Officially launched by the Minister of Youth and Sports, Hon. Mustapha Yussif, the outcome and follow-up agenda of the outreach campaign was the call for all partners, including the AU, the Government of Ghana, the UN, the private sector, and development partners to engage and use the platform of sport to advance economic development, social services and peace.

In his address, the minister admonished the youth to be agents of transformative change and encouraged them to take ownership of themselves and every opportunity they get in the global space. He further urged the youth to learn and share ideas as they all align with the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063.

At the sidelines of the African Games, UNFPA engaged over 100 young people from across Africa in youth-oriented activities. It was an outreach opportunity for UNFPA, through its Youth Fellowship Programme to engage in peer-to-peer conversations about key issues including sexual and reproductive health that are bothering the youth of Ghana.

It was also a platform created to prioritize the campaign for sport for development which catalyzes multiple entry points for mobilization and development action with young people and other key stakeholders to address issues such as livelihoods, climate action, and action against Gender Based Violence.

Other dignitaries at the opening session were the Country Representative of UNFPA Ghana, Dr. Wilfred Ochan, the Prince of Saudi Arabia; HRH Prince Fahad Bin Jalawi Al Saud, the UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana; Mr. Charles Abani, Director of IOM Special Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA; Ms. Mariama Mohammed Cisse, African Union Sports Council Director; Dr. Decius Chipande, IOM Chief of Mission to Ghana, Ms. Fatou Diallo Ndiaye, Director for Women, Gender and Youth Directorate - African Union, Ms Prudence Ngwenya and Afua Ansre Gender Equality Coordinator at UN WOMEN.

This year's edition brought together 52 countries with some 5000 athletes competing in 30 disciplines, including 8 Olympic qualifying events, 15 non-qualifying & 7 demonstration sports.

UNFPA TO RAISE NEW LEADERS



UNFPA Ghana has outlined key initiatives and programmes to implement this year's focus on nurturing and empowering new leaders, individuals and communities to reach their full potential to promote positive development across various sectors in Ghana.

In an interview with the Daily Statesman, a print media house in Accra, the Country Representative of UNFPA-Ghana, Dr. Wilfred Ochan, tackled a couple of areas within its ambit citing programmes such as the Youth Leaders (YoLe) Fellowship Programme, which has been designed to hone the leadership skills among Ghana's youth.

Last year, thirty-three new participants joined YoLe, a programme designed to prepare young people for meaningful careers in all areas of society both within Ghana and globally. The goal is to increase this number to 36 or more by the end of this year. Additionally, there are plans to expand these youth programs beyond Accra to other regions, aiming to enhance their impact and reach.

UNFPA will, in 2024, focus on promoting youth participation and voice in decision-making processes, thereby, departing from the 'business as usual' approach of merely consulting youth, to a more integrated one by ensuring their active involvement in key national conversations and discussions relevant to youth development.

In addition to these priorities, he noted that the UNFPA aims to rescue the vulnerable, reach the under-served and revitalize the ICPD agenda and team and partnerships needed to ensure effective programme delivery. He stressed that by collaborating with governments, civil society organizations, NGOs, and community groups, the UNFPA would drive and deliver on its mandate to promote sustainable development and improve the lives of individuals and communities across Ghana.

UNFPA YOUTH LEADER AMONG 400 YOUNG PEOPLE, PARTICIPATES AT ICPD30 GLOBAL YOUTH DIALOGUE

Mohammed Yakubu Sherif, a YoLe Fellow from UNFPA Ghana with other fellows from previous cohorts, joined over 400 young people from 130 countries, to celebrate and discuss their roles as changemakers and custodians of the ICPD30 Global Youth Dialogue conference. They emphasized the importance of sustainable development through the empowerment of women and girls and the protection of individual rights and choices.

Addressing a cross-section of the delegates, he underscored the critical importance of youth engagement in decision-making structures and processes. "The Global Youth Dialogue presents a unique opportunity for young people to engage in meaningful conversations, given that the ICPD gives young people the chance to thrive," he stated.



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At the ICPD30 Global Youth Dialogue, young voices who gathered at the event held in Benin, echoed with passion and purpose, forging a vision for the future.

Sherif, along with other young people from around the world who gathered, demonstrated UNFPA's commitment to enhancing youth participation and voice in decision-making processes. This event marked a shift from the traditional approach of merely consulting youth to a more integrated one, ensuring their active involvement in key national conversations and discussions pertinent to youth development.

The ICPD30 Global Youth Dialogue served as a platform for celebrating achievements, addressing challenges, and reimagining the future of sustainable development through the lens of youth empowerment and engagement. The gains and challenges shared during the event underscored the progress made and the urgent need to continue working towards a more inclusive and rights-based approach to development. The decision from this Dialogue fed into deliberations of the 57th Commission on Population and Development.



UNITED NATIONS IN GHANA AND KEY PARTNERS SET TO ROLL OUT "I PLEDGE FOR PEACE CAMPAIGN" IN GHANA AHEAD OF 2024 ELECTIONS.



As Ghana prepares for the upcoming 2024 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, the United Nations in Ghana, in collaboration with the National Peace Council, is set to roll out the "I Pledge for Peace Campaign". This initiative aims to reinforce the principles of peace among all Ghanaians before, during and after the forthcoming elections.

The campaign, initially launched to coincide with the 2023 International Day of Peace, will actively engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including individuals, communities, civil society organisations, government entities, religious leaders, and youth groups. The overarching goal is to foster a culture of peace, advocate for peaceful elections, and promote tolerance and peaceful co-existence before, during, and after the electoral process.

In the pursuit of peace in Ghana, the UNFPA is working with key stakeholders to implement a joint UNFPA-UNDP Peace Building Fund supported Programme with focus on Enhancing Social Cohesion and Social Contract, through the Empowerment of Women and Youth In Three Northern Regions Of Ghana.

Furthermore, UNFPA facilitated the participation of National Peace Council and National Youth Authority in the Regional training on Youth Peace and Security in Congo Brazzaville, organised by UNFPA West and Central Africa. Following this and action plan developed by the participants of the training, UNFPA joined other partners at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra aimed at kickstarting the development of a National Action Plan on Youth Peace and Security. UNFPA advocated for inclusion of youth as decision makers and drafters of the action plan in this process. . Plans are in advanced stages to launch the Technical Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security in Ghana.



Read more: <https://ghana.unfpa.org/en/news/united-nations-ghana-and-key-partners-set-roll-out-i-pledge-peace-campaign-ghana-ahead-2024>



LEVERAGING INFORMATION FOR PROGRESS: DATA AS ACCELERATOR FOR ICPD AND SDGS IN GHANA

ACCELERATING GHANA'S PROGRESS



The essence of data in interventions lies in its transformative power to drive evidence-based decision-making: monitor progress and assess results of implementations. Data therefore, enhances the effectiveness of interventions aimed at addressing complex social, economic, and environmental challenges. For UNFPA, accessibility, availability, and use of data remain the foundation of many successful interventions it carries out together with its partners.



These were part of the remarks made by Dr. Wilfred Ochan, Country Representative of UNFPA Ghana at the national dissemination of the key results from the 2022 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey Report on Fertility, Fertility Preferences, Family Planning and Water and Sanitation status in Ghana.

“UNFPA will continue to invest in data and data systems including exploring the use of innovative technologies and artificial intelligence applied to data, to generate the needed evidence to guide UNFPA and partners in pinpointing issues of concern, identifying geographical areas that are under-served and groups that are left behind.” he further highlighted.

The 2022 Ghana DHS report production was supported by USAID, UNFPA, and other partners.



STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIONS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



The Director-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Dr. Alvaro Bermejo, joined by the President and Executive Director of PPAG (Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana), Mr. Leckson-Leckey and Madam Abena Adubea Amoah respectively, paid a courtesy call on the UNFPA Representative in Ghana, Dr. David Wilfred Ochan to discuss collaborative efforts in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the country and to deepen the working relationship between the PPAG and UNFPA.

In their discussions, they acknowledged some of the great progress on SRHR and ICPD that have been made in Ghana. They also noted the areas of slow progress that need accelerated actions as we approach the 2030 timeline, such as the stagnant maternal mortality ratio, persistent unmet need for family planning, especially for youth, and the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and child marriage. They also noted some population groups that are left behind in access to vital services.



INNOVATIVE USE OF CENSUS DATA: UNFPA GHANA AND REGIONAL PARTNERS FORGE COLLABORATIVE VISION AT A WORKSHOP IN LOME, TOGO.

UNFPA Ghana joined other participants from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and World Bank in a workshop on Census Data in the Era of New Technologies for a collective vision of innovative use of population census data.

The workshop set up a collective actionable vision, leading to the development of new Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) using new technologies, AI, and innovations to enhance the use of population census data. Participants forged collaborative networks to enable partnerships to sustain and scale these systems to other countries yet to conduct fully digitalized population and housing censuses.

Discoveries were made on the potential use of AI to enhance the analysis and dissemination of census data. The workshop was the first in a series of such discussions among the countries in the sub-region, promoting the extensive application of new technologies in data production, analysis and utilisation for sustainable development.

Among the several follow-up engagements was the collaborative effort to organise a side event at the 57th Commission on Population and Development (CPD57) meeting in New York on "Harnessing Census Data for Future Policies: Collaborative Tech and AI Solutions." The side event promoted the results and achievements undertaken and disseminated on Census, AI, and digitalisation. It also contributed to advocacy by leveraging the revolutionary potential of technology to enhance the use of census data for informed policymaking in these countries within the context of ICPD30.

In a related development, Ghana organised another side event at the CPD57 in New York under the theme "ICPD @30 and Beyond - Across Africa: Achievements, Challenges, and Opportunities for Accelerated Actions to 2030 for the Unfinished Business." The event, co-hosted by countries like Cameroon, The Gambia, Lesotho, South Africa, and Uganda, shared innovative solutions and relevant successful models they have implemented to address key challenges and bottlenecks for accelerated actions towards 2030 while identifying key opportunities to advance the ICPD agenda for 'accelerated actions on the unfinished business of ICPD Programme of Action/Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (ICPD PoA/AADPD)'.



STRENGTHENING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: UNFPA GHANA HOSTS FIVE-DAY SURGE WORKSHOP

In alignment with USAID/BHA priorities, including leadership, coordination, and national capacity strengthening, UNFPA Ghana supported the conduct of a five-day Humanitarian Surge Workshop. This training and simulation initiative aimed to strengthen the internal systems of NGOs from the French speaking countries in the UNFPA West and Central Africa region for humanitarian response to address severe and prolonged crisis worsening each day, resulting in a confluence of factors such as gender-based violence, malnutrition, etc.

The workshop convened internal and external candidates for an intensive programme focused on humanitarian work at UNFPA. It included a comprehensive presentation on the organization's humanitarian efforts, followed by a series of learning, assessment, and simulation activities.



The essence of the workshop was to evaluate the readiness of these candidates for emergencies. Those who successfully passed the assessment were subsequently added to the UNFPA surge capacity roster, which serves as a global talent pool for recruitment in emergency contexts.

Overall, more than 50 humanitarian experts in the UNFPA Emergency Surge roster had the capacity built for a skilled, predictable, and consistent humanitarian response across the organization and in particular to respond to crises within the West and Central African Region.

The training provided a platform for enhancing the skills of humanitarian professionals, ensuring they are well-prepared to respond to emergencies swiftly and effectively. It emphasized the importance of having a readily available pool of specialists who understand the local context and can communicate effectively in local languages. This strategic move not only improves UNFPA's responsiveness but also strengthens the overall humanitarian response capacity within the West and Central African Region.



Despite the significant progress in expanding its roster for purposes such as the necessity for skilled, predictable, and consistent humanitarian professionals who understand the local context, and ideally speak local languages, UNFPA has faced challenges, including a shortage of French-speaking specialists and roster members from the region, which has resulted in extended deployment turnaround times during critical emergencies. This has highlighted the urgent need to enhance the skills of staff members in-country offices, manage surges in the region, and equip staff with the necessary humanitarian preparedness and response capacity to lead emergency interventions effectively, hence the workshop.

This initiative underscores the organization's commitment to ensuring that humanitarian responses are timely, effective, and inclusive, particularly focusing on the most vulnerable populations. The impact of this training and capacity-building effort is evident in UNFPA's enhanced ability to deliver on its mandate and provide life-saving support during emergencies



UNFPA understands the critical importance of quickly scaling up resources such as personnel, funding, and materials during humanitarian emergencies. Expanding human resources and building strategic capacity through initiatives like the Surge Workshop ensures that scarce humanitarian resources are utilized effectively and efficiently.



UNFPA LEADERS FROM WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA GATHER IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE TO DRIVE TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA

The annual UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Leadership Meeting took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on the theme: "Accelerating progress on the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan in West and Central Africa", where participants reflected on how to accelerate the implementation of UNFPA programmes in the region.

The meeting is one of a series of UNFPA strategic meetings held periodically in one of the region's countries, serving as a platform for sharing ideas, strategies, and collaborative efforts to achieve the ICPD agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

This leadership meeting offered a platform to deliberate on strategic priorities and opportunities in the region aimed at achieving the organization's objectives, including the reduction of maternal mortality, enhancing access to and utilization of family planning services, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence.



At the opening ceremony, Regional Director Sennen Hounton stressed the importance of adaptation and innovation to accelerate progress on the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

The discussion and agreement from the meeting inspired the Ghana country office team to work to achieve the three transformative results in the country by 2030.



Participants discussing investments in the human capital of the youth during a working group session.

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