

Liberia Update

April-June 2016

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UNFPA Turns Over Juvenile and Women Prisoners’ Rehabilitation Facility to Gov’t

Efforts are underway to reform Liberia’s judicial system and allow the speedy trial of detainees, The Justice system continues to grapple with high numbers of pretrial detainees.

On June 8, as part of its contribution to this reform process, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) turned over to the Ministry of Justice a training center for the rehabilitation of juvenile and women detainees at the Monrovia Central Prison.

The facility provides skills training, first aid and psychosocial counseling for juvenile and women prisoners. It was constructed in collaboration with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness (THINK Liberia).



UNFPA Liberia Representative Dr. Oluremi Sogunro

At the dedicatory ceremony, UNFPA Representative Dr. Oluremi Sogunro said the initiative was aimed at offering a new life to juvenile and women prisoners at the Monrovia Central Prison.



“If left unrehabilitated, these people might never be able to rebuild their lives even after they have been free from prison;” Dr. Sogunro said.

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UNFPA Representation in Liberia

Dr. Oluremi Sogunro
Representative

Cooper Building
120 UN Drive Mamba Point
P.O Box 10-0274
1000 Monrovia, 10 Liberia
Tel. +231-770004168

 unfpaliberia
 unfpaliberia

Editorial contact:

Calixte Hessou
Advocacy & Communications
Officer
E-mail: hessou@unfpa.org
Skype: calixtehess

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UNFPA Turns Over Juvenile and Women Prisoners' Rehabilitation Facility to Government -Cont'd

The UNFPA Liberia Representative said that the initiative was part of a bigger programme by the UN to make prison facilities across Liberia, not just detention centers but also places for rehabilitation.

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Rule of Law, Mr. Waldemar Vrey, speaking at the program, called for the decongestion of prison facilities across Liberia.

“The percentage of people still awaiting trial is unacceptably high. Some people have been detained in jail longer than the sentence they would have received;” Mr. Vrey said.

He also called for the use of alternative means as provided for by the law. According to him, the bail system could be used to release people, particularly first time offenders.

He also called for the use of alternative means as provided for by the law. “The bail system could be used to release people, particularly first time offenders;” he said.

Meanwhile, the Government of Liberia has welcomed efforts by partners, including the UN, to help it decongest prison facilities in the country.

According to Deputy Justice Minister for Economic Affairs, Cllr. Harriette Badio, the Justice Ministry takes seriously the high number of pre-trial detainees at prison facilities across Liberia. The ministry was working with the judiciary on modalities that could help decongest the prisons.



Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Rule of Law, Mr. Waldemar Vrey,



The facility will provide computer training as well as tailoring for adolescent and women prisoners



**Deputy Justice Minister for Economic Affairs
Cllr. Harriette Badio**

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UNFPA and MoH Step up Efforts to end Fistula in Liberia

It is estimated that between 600-1000 women and girls develop fistula every year in Liberia as a result of obstetric causes. The persistence of fistula increases health inequities and health-care system constraints, as well as wider challenges for women and girls in the country.

In 2008, the Government of Liberia with support from UNFPA launched the Liberia Fistula Project to prevent, treat and socially reintegrate fistula survivors.

On June 16, as part of its fistula prevention and awareness creation, the Liberia Fistula Project held a one-day stakeholders meeting in Fish Town, River Gee County.



A group of TTMs discusses their possible role in Fistula prevention

The meeting brought together religious leaders, youth groups, local government officials, health authorities, Trained Traditional Midwives (TTMs) as well as health partners. It was part of a week-long activities to raise awareness on the issues of fistula and its effects on the community.



A group of fistula survivors depicts some of the unorthodox means of delivery carried out by Trained Traditional Midwives (TTMs) and Trained Birth Attendants (TBAs) in the community.

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UNFPA and MoH Step up Efforts to end Fistula in Liberia -Cont'd

Speaking at the program, the Director of Family Health Division at the Ministry of Health, Dr. Joseph Kerkula, said working to improve the maternal health sector would require the efforts of everyone, including community members.

He called on the TTMs in the area to join the fight against maternal deaths by always taking pregnant women to health facility for delivery.

River Gee County Health Team Officer, Dr. Trokon Washington, outlined challenges in the provision of healthcare services in the county such as access by many people including pregnant women to health facilities.

Many people trek more than 5 kilometers to access healthcare services.

He disclosed that as part of efforts to reduce the number of women dying from or developing fistula during childbirth, the River Gee County Health Team has established district health teams across the county. The teams will directly work with community members and TTMs to ensure timely referral of pregnant women.

Also, at the program, UNFPA Assistant Representative, Dr. Philderald Pratt, said that UNFPA was keen on supporting the government to create a safe environment where women and young girls would enjoy good health. He said pregnancy should not be a “death sentence” or a condition which leads women to be rejected by society just because they did not receive the adequate and timely emergency obstetric care during childbirth; something that has made them to develop fistula.

Dr. Pratt urged for continued support to the healthcare delivery system of Liberia; especially in the provision of logistics and capacity building of health workers.



Dr. Trokon Washington

Meanwhile, about 10 women from across the south eastern region have benefitted from free fistula surgery conducted by a team led by Lead Fistula Surgeon, Dr. John Mulbah, along with three other surgeons. The activities were supported by the United Na-



tions Population Fund (UNFPA) with funding from Zonta International. According to Dr. Mulbah, the Liberia Fistula Project, has made progress towards eliminating fistula and supporting fistula survivors through its three-pronged strategy of prevention, treatment and social reintegration.

The project has supported over 1,300 fistula repair surgeries for women and girls in need, and rehabilitating one-third of them.



Dr. Philderald Pratt

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Stories of Two Fistula Survivors who Recently benefited From Free Repair Surgery

A 36-year old woman From Jaytoken, River Gee County

In 2001, I became pregnant for the first time. I lived in Jaytoken, River Gee County. I used to travel on foot for more than three hours to get to the nearest health center in Fish Town for Big Belly treatment (Ante Natal Care).



At labor, there was no transportation to get to the clinic either, so I stayed at home. The contractions lasted for 2 whole days and nights, and it was very, very difficult. Finally, some people from the village managed to get a car and they took me to the health center in Fish Town. But when we got there, we were told to go back home because no one was at the center to look after me. The nurses were attending a workshop out of Fish Town.

I went back to my village the next day. But before reaching there, the baby was already dead. The Trained Traditional Midwife (TTM) gathered her friends to get the baby out. When they pulled the baby out, it hurt so much, and my baby was dead. It had already died in my womb.

From that day I have been so sick: I could never hold my urine anymore, and since then the problem only got worse. My family has been helping me to survive. But my boyfriend decided to take another woman because he wanted to have a child which I was unable to. We fuss nearly every day. I cannot go among my friends because I was afraid that they would notice my condition.

I am here because of my father. He was the one who heard that doctors were coming to River Gee to help women suffering from the peepee sickness (fistula). He helped me with money for transportation.

My hope is that after a successful operation, I will be able to have a child.

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Stories of Two Fistula Survivors who Recently benefited From Free Repair Surgery -Cont'd

A 44-year old woman From Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County

My story is a pathetic one. I was raped by five men in September 1990 during the heat of the civil war. At the time, I was five months pregnant. I lost the baby in the process. My family managed to cross the border with me into exile in La Cote D'Ivoire. There, I spent weeks in hospital before I came to myself because at the time of the rape I fell unconscious. After I left the hospital, I realized that I could not control my urine again.

Besides that, I felt my womb was coming down from within me. I went back to the hospital but was told that my situation required special attention. From that time, I am never myself. Every time that I have sex, it is so painful that I decided not to do it. It is such a difficult life that I have lived since September 1990.



It took me 19 years before I received the first treatment (surgery) which was in 2009. But it never helped me.

At times, I feel living is useless for me. I don't have a child and I know I might not be able to have one. Though I am taking care of my brothers and sisters' children, it sometimes gets to me that I don't have any on my own. I have never had any relationship that would last long because no man would want to keep a woman that he cannot have sex with.

Having lived with this condition for almost 26 years, I have now come to accept that I can have a life without personally bearing my own children. The only thing that I pray for now is for the operation to be successful so that I don't continue to live in pain and shame.



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UNFPA Supports Liberian Youth to Develop a National Youth Manifesto

Young people (defined as ages 14-35) make up 65% of the Liberian population. Those of voting-age among this population represent an estimated 59% of eligible voters.

Ensuring that this youthful population is prepared to contribute to national development does not only mean empowering them through the provision of education

“The young people of Liberia want to make their voices heard. There are lots of issues affecting the development of young people that can be placed in the national youth manifesto in order to hold political parties accountable to



FLY's President, Mr. Augustine Tamba

but also letting them get involved with policy formulation. And this would create the opportunity for participatory democracy and governance in the country.

Next year, Liberia will be holding its general and presidential elections, which will mark the first time in the country's history that one democratically elected President will be handing over to another in a peaceful transition.

In this connection, the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) with support from the United Nations Population Fund has begun a nationwide consultation process that would eventually lead to the development of a National Youth Manifesto.

According to FLY, the developed National Youth Manifesto will reflect the views and aspirations of young people across the fifteen (15) political sub-divisions of Liberia; it advocates and “demands” politicians to be supportive of youth develop-

considering that they (political parties) depend on young people to achieve state power;” FLY's President, Mr. Augustine Tamba said.

Speaking at one of the regional consultative meetings in Liberia's central city of Gbarnga, Mr. Tamba said it was important for young people to work with political parties to identify areas that are germane to youth development that will be implemented by the next government.

He noted that views of young people during the nationwide consultations would be validated in July 2016 and placed in the manifesto, which will be signed by leaders of political parties to demonstrate their commitment regarding implementation.

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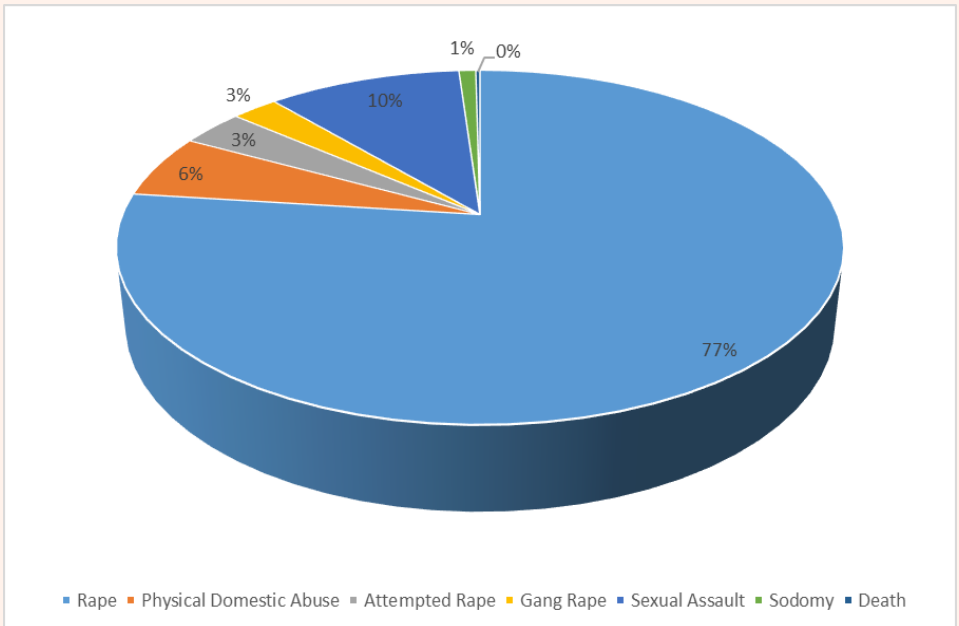
UNFPA Supplies GBV One-Stop Centers with Hepatitis B Vaccine

Despite efforts by the Government and partners to ensure that the population enjoys the highest possible physical and mental health, women and girls in Liberia continue to be subjected to gender-based violence (GBV); mainly sexual violence including rape.

It is a major global health problem. It can cause chronic infection and put people at high risk of death from cirrhosis and liver cancer.

The virus is transmitted through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person”.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED CASES REPORTED BY 12 SGBV ONE-STOP CENTERS IN 7 COUNTIES (January - March 2016)



SGBV leads to physical and mental trauma. It also leads to long-term social consequences for the survivors, such as stigmatization by their families and the community.

In order to ensure that the health of survivors of rape are adequately maintained, UNFPA has brought in country about 5,000 vials of hepatitis B Vaccine for use by centers catering to rape survivors. The consignment is expected to serve a population of about 50,000 people including 15,000 adults and 35,000 children.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Hepatitis B is a potentially life-threatening liver infection caused by the hepatitis B virus.

The virus is said to be prevalent in Liberia. “Hepatitis B is on the increase in the country. We want to ensure that rape survivors are treated comprehensively for all sexually transmitted infections;” says Mrs. Luopu Sherman, Gender Coordinator at the Ministry of Health.

Mrs. Sherman said though the availability of hepatitis vaccine is essential in the treatment of rape, SGBV Units across the country had lacked the vaccine for more than 5 years.

“The importation of the vaccine and its subsequent distribution by the Ministry of Health is timely,” she noted.

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UNFPA, UNICEF & WHO launch New Project to Improve Maternal and Adolescent Health Services in Maryland County

As part of efforts to improve maternal and adolescent health services while strengthening health system resilience and rebuilding confidence of communities in health services UNFPA, WHO, and UNICEF with support from the Multi Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) launched a US\$ 1 million Maternal and Adolescent Health project in Maryland County, one of the difficult and hard-to-reach counties.

Three clinic in the catchment areas including Karloken, Glofarcken, and Fish Town Clinics will benefit from the project with UNFPA providing support to the existing supply chain systems at all levels of stock movement and distribution; ensuring the required quantity and timely supply of medicines to the health facilities.

WHO will be responsible for the overall coordination and monitoring for impact



A Technical Working Session by Partners

The project named Strengthening Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health Service Delivery, Death Surveillance and Response in South Eastern Liberia aims at increasing access to quality, equitable maternal and new born health services that significantly contribute to maternal new born survival through health facility and community interventions.

It is also aimed at generating data on maternal deaths that informs health actions to reduce mortality through robust community engagement and community response systems, as well as strengthening information dissemination that increases knowledge and potential utilization of sexual and reproductive health services among adolescents in Maryland County.

activities, while UNICEF will support the Maryland County Health Team to roll out the initiative in targeted catchment communities supported by the project.

During a recent inception visit to the county, the three UN agencies, the Maryland County Health Team and partners conducted a technical working session at which time they integrated the project’s activities into the 2016-2017 County annual operational plan. A three-month operational plan reflecting the months of July, August and September was developed.



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Ministry of Health and UNFPA Train gCHVs in Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties

The Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and funding from the World Bank recently completed training of 186 general community health volunteers (gCHVs) from Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties in Community Event Based Surveillance (CEBS) and its implementation.

According to the Ministry of Health, the training is aimed at empowering the gCHVs with knowledge in early case detection, reporting and timely response to all priority diseases and event of public health concerns.

Liberia introduced the Community Event Based Surveillance (CEBS) system following sobering



A Group of Participants Pose for Photo

This training was part of efforts to strengthen health system resilience to epidemics and outbreaks like Ebola through strong disease surveillance mechanism. UNFPA led the stopping of new Ebola transmissions in Liberia through contact tracing which has now evolved to form part of a comprehensive disease surveillance system.

The training focused on community case detection, reporting and timely response, understanding the reporting channels, ensuring proper documentation of triggers as well as understanding communities defined role in the CEBS system.

experience gained from the EVD outbreak that claimed the lives of over 4000 Liberians including 200 health workers.

CEBS is an organized and rapid collection of information from community events that are a potential risk to public health. According to the Ministry of Health, it has demonstrated the potential to improve early case identification, reduce transmission in the community and enhance response efforts to epidemic prone public health events.