



SIERRA LEONE CELEBRATES WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 2016

“Investing in Teenage Girls”

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), UNFPA and partners celebrated World Population Day on 11th July, 2016 on the theme, “Investing in Teenage Girls”. The main events of the celebration were held at the Miata Conference Hall, Youyi Building, Freetown. The event, which was chaired by John Sumailah, the Development Secretary, MoFED, brought together government officials from the ministries of Finance and Economic Development, Health and Sanitation, Youth Affairs, Education Science and Technology, Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, the National Youth Commission, the UN Resident Coordinator’s office and members of the UN Country Team, donor partners, including

Irish Aid, JICA, DFID; implementing partners, student midwives, school pupils and other young people.

Key highlights of the event were the keynote address by Mr Momoh Vandy, Deputy Minister, MoFED, who spoke on behalf of Government, noting that they recognize the imperative of providing for the needs of young people, particularly teenage girls. The UNFPA Representative, Dr. Kim Eva Dickson also delivered a statement on the need to invest in teenage girls and UNFPA’s work in ensuring that every young person, especially teenage girls, realize their full potential. Statements of support were also delivered by Mr Sunil Saigal, the UN Resident Coordinator; Dr Sinead Walsh, the Irish Ambassador to Sierra Leone,

Above: Teenage school girls cheering to live musical performance. Below L-R: UNFPA-supported student midwives; members of the high table (L-R): US Embassy representative; Mr Bai Mamoud Bangura, Minister of Youth Affairs; Dr. Kim Dickson, UNFPA Representative; Mr Sunil Saigal, UN Resident Coordinator; Mr Momoh Vandy, Deputy Minister, MoFED; Mr John Sumailah, Development Secretary, MoFED; Mariam Samai, pupil and National Girls’ Camp member; Sinead Walsh, Irish Ambassador; and Dr. Santigie Sesay, Director, Reproductive & Child Health, MoHS; and student midwives.



Dr Santigie Sesay, Director of Reproductive and Child Health, on behalf of the Ministry of Health & Sanitation; and other partners. Mariam Saimai, a pupil of the Annie Walsh Memorial School and the National Girl's Camp, delivered a passionate statement on behalf of her colleague emphasizing the need for investing in them. A call to action video documentary was showed on ending teenage pregnancy and early child marriage. A drama skit on key messages of teenage pregnancy, early marriage, education of the girls child, and fistula

was performed by the outreach team of UNFPA's implementing partner, Aberdeen Women Centre. Millicent Rhodes, female musician and girl child advocate, passionately delivered a live performance of her songs on girl child education, teenage pregnancy and peer pressure. A vote of thanks was delivered by the Country Director, Restless Development, James Fofanah. UNFPA's implementing partners, Marie Stopes and Aberdeen Women Centre provided outreach family planning and advocacy services.



Above: Drama skit by a UNFPA implementing partner, Aberdeen Women's Centre on key messages on teenage pregnancy, early marriage, education of the girl child, and fistula. Below (L-R): Millicent Rhodes, popular female musician and UNFPA advocate on live performance; an adolescent girl receiving Family Planning services from a UNFPA partner, Plan Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone (PPASL); and UNFPA staff listening attentively to the key messages.



“Investing in Teenage Girls” WPD Key Messages

As part of the 2016 World Population Day celebration, key messages were developed to highlight country-specific analysis of the situation of teenage girls in Sierra Leone, and the work of UNFPA, Government and partners in improving the lives of teenage girls.

1. Say no to teenage pregnancy, educate the girl child

Education is a basic human right and the key to development and self-actualization. Young people, particularly teenage girls, need education as a source of their empowerment and wellbeing.

UNFPA supports the provision of health services for teenage girls to improve their health outcomes by providing access to appropriate information and quality services through the training of over 1000 health care workers, the establishment of 48 adolescent and youth friendly health centers and peer educators.



Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

UNFPA and partners celebrate



WORLD POPULATION DAY 2016

Theme: “Investing in Teenage Girls”

...because everyone counts



2. Invest in teenage girls to realize the demographic dividend

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the opportunity to promote the interest, wellbeing and welfare of young people, particularly teenage girls, as never before, to be empowered to claim their rights, meet their needs and realize their aspirations and potentials.

UNFPA supports the Government of Sierra Leone to engage teenage girls to be part of the planning, implementation and general development processes. Teenage girls are provided with appropriate information and services thereby empowering them as champions of their own destiny and change agents for the health and wealth of society.

3. End child marriage...educate the girl child

Teenage girls in and out of school in Sierra Leone are forced into marriage as a consequence of pregnancy. Child marriage deprives teenage girls of their youthfulness and denies them a bright future in which they could realize their full potentials.

UNFPA and partners are working with the Government of Sierra Leone to educate young people about teenage pregnancy, how to protect themselves and help them stay in school, as well as have access to skills training, as preventive mechanism; and to end child marriage altogether.



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CALLS TO ACTION AND MESSAGES OF SUPPORT



“Teenage girls should be encouraged to continue schooling, be confident citizens who know their rights with reduced vulnerabilities...Invest in teenage girls and then no one would be left behind.”

- *Mariam Samai, Pupil and National Girls' Camp Member*

“Invest in teenage girls and work together for their empowerment to enable them act as champions of their own destiny and change agents for the transformation of Sierra Leone”.

- *Momoh Vandi, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development*



“It is incumbent on us to ensure that ‘a safe, successful and healthy passage from a teenager into adulthood is the right of every child’. This right can only be fulfilled if families and societies make focused investments in their wellbeing.”

- *Sunil Saigal, UN Resident Coordinator*

“There is an African Proverb that says, ‘if you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven’t spent the night with a mosquito...’ ...You can make a difference ... and a real positive one. So girls, please identify your goals, aspire to be better than the best and break away from the general negativity around the life of a young girl in our society. You can be the embodiment of success.’...‘the most important thing a girl can put on is her confidence.’ ”

- *UNFPA Representative, Dr. Kim Eva Dickson*



World Population Day in the Media

The Media Alliance for Population & Development (MAPDI), a UNFPA advocacy partner, facilitated engagements with the media to popularize issues affecting teenage girls. Before and after the event, media activities included interviews and discussions by UNFPA and Government on radio and TV on the key messages.

8 July 2016

- **Star Radio:** Discussion on Investing in Teenage Girls to realize the Demographic Dividend
- **Star TV:** Discussion on Saying No to Teenage Pregnancy, Educating the Girl Child

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- **SLBC TV:** Discussion on Saying No to Teenage Pregnancy and Educating the Girl Child

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- **Star TV:** Message of the Executive Director delivered by the Representative.
- **Radio Democracy:** Interview on the Significance of WPD and the 2016 Theme
- **Star Radio:** End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, Educate the Girl Child
- **Africa Young Voices Radio:** End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, Educate the Girl Child.

A number of journalists covered the event.