

Sierra Leone



NEWSLETTER 2016



AN ERA OF TRANSITION

Past EBOLA
Present POST EBOLA
Future EBOLA RECOVERY



Table of contents



UNFPA Sierra Leone

- 03** AN ERA OF TRANSITION
- 05** SAVING WOMEN'S LIVES
- 09** BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DATA DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT
- 11** EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH
- 14** FAREWELLS TO COLLEAGUES
- 15** COUNTRY OFFICE STAFF NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



AN ERA OF TRANSITION

The first half of **2016** was an era of transition for UNFPA Sierra Leone. There was a change in leadership with a new Country Representative assuming office, a shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as from Ebola surveillance to recovery.

After two and half years of dedicated service, the former Representative, Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi left and was succeeded by Dr. Kim Eva Dickson, a physician and public health specialist. There was a two-month transition period, which was strategically managed by Dr. Sennen Hounton, a senior technical adviser on reproductive health, on secondment from UNFPA Headquarters in New York.

Dr. Hounton provided management to staff and a wealth of technical guidance towards personnel and institutional capacity strengthening, as well as resource mobilisation. He inspired the development of the Country Office's (CO) first ever Annual Report, which highlights the key interventions and achievements of 2015.

To meet the demands of the new SDGs unveiled in 2015 and to best meet the national post-Ebola President's Recovery Priorities, our CO also began to realign its 2015-2019 country programme with the objectives of the SDGs.

In our quest to save women's lives and to empower adolescents and youth the Country Office implemented a number of activities aimed at keeping issues that matter high on the agenda. We also worked to build the capacity of our partners and those on the ground to deliver quality services to the people who need them most.

UNFPA acknowledges the support of the Government of Sierra Leone, donor partners and implementing partners. We look forward to the rest of the year with optimism and renewed strength as we double our efforts to save lives.



The Representative with Hon. Isata Kabia, Minister of State II, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

NEW REPRESENTATIVE ASSUMES OFFICE

Country Office management and staff heartily welcomed Dr. Kim Eva Dickson, the new UNFPA Representative to Sierra Leone, in May 2016. Dr. Dickson succeeds Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi who has been appointed UNFPA Representative in Afghanistan.

Dr. Dickson is a physician and public health specialist, with more than 20 years national and international experience. Before joining UNFPA, she was a Senior Adviser with UNICEF, New York, where she managed the organization's global portfolio on maternal and newborn health.

In her maiden meeting with staff, Dr. Dickson shared her vision and stressed the need for teamwork, proactivity and timely delivery of results. She then toured the Country Office to meet with staff in their respective offices.

Soon after her arrival, Dr. Dickson paid a courtesy call on State House and presented her credentials. During the visit, she pledged to strengthen the long-standing partnership between UNFPA and the government and people of Sierra Leone. Welcoming Dr. Dickson, President Koroma acknowledged UNFPA's ongoing support to the government and people of Sierra Leone and specifically acknowledged the role the organization played in contact-tracing during the devastating Ebola outbreak. He assured Dr. Dickson that his government will do everything possible to make her stay rewarding and productive.

Dr. Dickson also paid courtesy calls on a number of UN agencies, government ministries, departments and agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Office of the First Lady and Statistics Sierra Leone. She was warmly welcomed during these visits and congratulated on her appointment by all.



Dr. Kim Dickson presenting credentials to H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma.

“ .. teamwork quality and efficiency .. ”



The Representative meets the Youth Affairs Minister, Bai Mamoud Bangura.

SAVING WOMEN'S LIVES

RECOMMITTING TO THE CAMPAIGN TO END OBSTETRIC FISTULA

“ .. Obstetric fistula is almost exclusively a condition of the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalized women and girls .. ”



Cross section of patients Commemorating International Day to End Fistula.

In May, international and local partners working on prevention, treatment, care and rehabilitation of obstetric fistula sufferers recommitted themselves towards ending the condition, as part of activities marking the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula.

The event was held at the Aberdeen Women's Centre and chaired by Dr. Joan Shephard, Principal of the National School of Midwifery Freetown. It was attended by affected women as well as others, including traditional leaders,

international development partners and implementing partners. The UNFPA Representative, Dr. Dickson, used the occasion to call for a reflection on obstetric fistula, review of progress made so far and identification of areas for further strategic focus in order to improve services for affected women and girls. She reminded all that *“obstetric fistula is almost exclusively a condition of the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalized women and girls.”* Dr. Dickson reaffirmed UNFPA's commitment to its partnership with government and other key stakeholders *“to end...this debilitating condition.”* Based on her own personal story of helping one young fistula survivor when she commenced her medical career she urged stakeholders to work together to *“Let every woman's fistula story have a happy ending, but most of all, let us put an end to fistula stories,”* she said.

In his keynote address, Dr. Santigie Sesay, Director of Reproductive and Child Health in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation expressed government's renewed commitment to ending obstetric fistula in Sierra Leone, and encouraged partners working in the prevention, care and rehabilitation to redouble their efforts.

This was re-echoed by other speakers, including Haja Hawa Turay, Executive Director of Haikal; Dr. Abdulai D Sesay, Chair of the Health Committee in Parliament; Kosia, Country Director, Aberdeen Women's Centre; Dr. Jeredine George, Aberdeen Women's Centre, PC Shebora Kasanga II of Bombali Shebora Chiefdom.



P.C. Bai Shebora Kasanga II reaffirms the support of traditional leaders to end Obstetric Fistula.



Professional midwifery training graduation ceremony.

SUPPORT TO MIDWIFERY EDUCATION

“ .. human resource in Sierra Leone : a key to safe motherhood.. ”

Sierra Leone has the worst maternal and newborn indicators in the world at 1,360 deaths per 100,000 and 39 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively, an estimated lifetime risk of maternal mortality of one in 17 (WHO, 2015; DHS, 2013).

At the onset of the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the country's health system was unable to quickly and effectively manage the disease. As a result, thousands of lives were lost, including more than 221 health care workers (WHO Situation Report, 2014).

UNFPA has therefore been supporting pre and inservice training for midwives in Sierra Leone and providing reproductive health commodities, equipment, supplies and consumables. It has also been rehabilitating and equipping health facilities to strengthen facility resilience and provide an enabling environment for service delivery.

UNFPA invests in the training of professional midwives as a crucial part of reducing maternal and newborn mortality since they are essential health workers in the provision of quality services to women.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, UNFPA CO provides tuition fees, payment of monthly student allowances, curriculum reviews, research and other logistics to the two midwifery schools in Freetown and Makeni to train State Registered Nurses and State Enrolled Community Health Nurses as professional midwives. In June the National School of Midwifery in Freetown graduated 61 new midwives with support from UNFPA.

This latest group of midwives are the 30th set of students to graduate from the school upon completion of an 18- month post-basic professional midwifery training. This is the largest set of qualified midwives ever to be produced by the school. This will go a long way to help cushion the current shortage of midwives in areas where they are most needed. Dr. Joan Shephard, Principal of the National School of Midwifery acknowledged UNFPA's 'immense' support to the school, calling the midwives “a much needed human resource in Sierra Leone, key to safe motherhood and pivotal in the reduction of maternal and infant mortality.”

The UNFPA Assistant Representative, Ibrahim S. Kamara, congratulated all those involved in the

training programme, saying: *“Now is the time to invest in the training of midwives as a critical cadre of health care professionals, as it is crucial to have professional midwives who are equipped with competencies and skills to conduct deliveries, provide high quality antenatal, postnatal and family planning services.”*

Delivering the keynote address, the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation, Madam Madina Rahman, reiterated the ministry’s commitment to improving maternal and child health in Sierra Leone.

She indicated the importance of investing in strategies, quality care to reduce or prevent the unnecessary loss of lives during pregnancy and childbirth. UNFPA’s partnership with the MoHS in the midwifery project has now produced more than 400 midwives from the two midwifery schools, surpassing the target of 300 set for implementation of the Health Sector Strategic Plan (2010-2015).

UNFPA and JHPIEGO, in collaboration with the Directorate of Nursing & Midwifery Services, MoHS, and with support from the Japanese Government, also conducted a five-day Master and Champions’ Training Workshop for Midwifery Tutors and practicing Midwives, as Trainers on ‘Helping Mothers Survive Bleeding After Birth’ and ‘Helping Babies Breathe’ in Bo. Training was facilitated by Dr. Mike N. Kagawa from the Makerere University College of Health Sciences, Uganda.



Midwives at the Master and Champions’ training in Bo, learning to help mothers survive and babies breathe after birth.



UNFPA and MoHS supply equipment to Port Loko Government Hospital.

In February and March of 2016, with funding from the World Bank, UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), conducted a two-week competency-based Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (EmONC) training for 121 health personnel in emergency obstetric care in the regional cities of Bo, Kenema and Makeni. The training has contributed significantly to strengthening the capacity of maternity unit staff in newly rehabilitated health facilities, comprising midwives, doctors, community health officers and state enrolled community health nurses.

In partnership with the Directorate of Reproductive Health and Family Planning, MoHS, UNFPA also conducted a two-day orientation training on Maternal Death Surveillance & Response (MDSR) in the northern regional city of Makeni, aimed at building the capacity of key health staffs at the District Health Management Teams, who are currently spearheading the implementation of planned MDSR activities.

UNFPA also equipped 10 Government EmONC and BEmONC facilities designated by the MoHS in Bo, Kenema, Kambia, Port Loko, Bonthe, Moyamba and Kono districts, with medical equipment and supplies. The support is one of the key components of a joint MoHS/World Bank and UNFPA project to upgrade enablers to provide Emergency Obstetric Care.

UNFPA and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) also signed an agreement in March to strengthen Emergency Obstetric Care through improvement of maternal, newborn and child (MNC) health services. This joint project is expected to increase number of operational health facilities that provide quality sexual and reproductive maternal, neonatal and adolescent health services, including EmONC and family planning services.

WITH UNFPA'S SUPPORT

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National School of Midwifery - Freetown

The National School of Midwifery recruited **47** new students and bonded **91** student midwives in 2016.

School of Midwifery - Makeni

The School has trained and recruited over **300** Community Midwives who have been deployed for the first time to all **65** BEmONC and over **40** PHUs in the country; and has also continued to train and bond **180** student midwives.

CapaCare

CapaCare graduated **14** Surgical Assistant Community Health Officers, deployed nine at PCMH and all district hospitals, where they have conducted over **60%** of all the surgeries, including caesarian sections.

Marie Stopes Sierra Leone

Marie Stopes Sierra Leone provided **22,944** clients with SRH services, and general medical services and referrals to public facilities for **397** Ebola survivors in 2016.

National Nurse Anaesthetist Training Center

National Nurse Anaesthetist Training Center has trained **137** nurse anaesthetists; **8** anaesthetist technicians who have been deployed in all public, private and faith based hospitals in the country; and bonded **20** student nurse anaesthetists in 2016.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DATA DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

“ .. Supporting the generation and use of credible data for development planning, evidence-based decision making, policy formulation and empowerment is at the heart of the work of UNFPA.. ”

Alongside other UN agencies and development partners, UNFPA has been instrumental in providing support to building the technical and institutional capacities of Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) in the production and dissemination of national statistical data.

Most recently, this included the successful conduct of the 2015 Population and Housing Census and preparatory activities. The support includes hiring of a technical team comprising the Census Technical Adviser, Geographic Information Systems Expert, Data Specialist and Census Communication Expert. UNFPA has also supported the setting up of an ultramodern Data Processing Centre.

As a result of this strengthened capacity, Statistics Sierra Leone released the provisional census results on time in March 2016. The initial census data indicate an increase in the population of Sierra Leone by over 42%, that is, from 4,976,871 in 2004 to an estimated 7,075,641 in 2015, with an average annual growth rate of 3.2 percent.

On release of the results the Statistician General Mohamed King Koroma thanked stakeholders for their support, *“we are grateful to the Government of Sierra Leone for leading the resource mobilization efforts and UN agencies and development partners for their support, particularly UNFPA, DFID, Irish Aid and UNDP,”* said Mohamed King Koroma, the Statistician General.



A cross section of participants at the census tabulation workshop.

With UNFPA technical and financial support Statistics Sierra Leone (SSL) organized the Census Tabulation workshop in Makeni from 19 to 25 June 2016. The workshop was attended by 34 participants drawn from the UN Country Team, Civil Society, Universities of Sierra Leone-Fourah Bay College, Njala University, Political Parties, and the Census Technical Committee members. Participants were grouped into six main thematic areas: Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Migration; Housing facilities; Ownership of durables; Agriculture; Fertility, Mortality and Nuptiality and Ebola socioeconomic impacts.

The main goal of the workshop was to provide participants with an overview of Sierra Leone's 2015 Census questions and aggregate outputs and discuss how they should be presented in tables. These tabulations are to be designed for producing statistics at all geographical levels such as national, regional, district and locality.

The workshop was conducted through a mix of expert presentations on the census questionnaire and codes, expected census database, census products and dissemination plan. Group work and presentations by thematic areas were followed by discussions. The workshop ended with development and adoption of a dissemination plan and tabulation outlines. This will guide the writing of the tabulation program to be used to generate the final results in December 2016.



The census results tabulation workshop Wusum Hotel, Makeni, in June, 2016.



Results-Based Monitoring Training in Bo.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Monitoring activities of our implementing partners (IPs) have been revamped, following the hiring of a new monitoring and evaluation specialist last year. In close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), the monitoring team has conducted a field visit in the first quarter of 2016. Mwaluma A. Gegbe, the M&E specialist, has outlined the objectives of the quarterly visits as *“to review IP’s data collection systems and provide the needed technical support, where necessary.”* The joint monitoring team would also *“review IP’s activities as indicated in their work plans, ascertain the status of implementation of activities and availability of reports, assess financial management capacities and practices, lessons learnt, and challenges faced for necessary action.”* The joint monitoring exercise is also a way of providing systematic programme support and supervision.



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Youth Engagement for National Development.

EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

“ .. Promoting discipline among youth for nation building.. ”

To fulfil commitments made in the African Youth Charter and the Revised National Youth Policy 2014, the Government of Sierra Leone declared the 21st – 26th April 2016 as National Youth Week. The main objective of the week was to promote public awareness and commitment to youth related issues, including health, education, employment and governance. The theme for this year’s celebration was *“Campaign against violence; promoting discipline amongst youth for nation building.”*

Activities undertaken included an official opening of the week with youth from across the country in attendance. The President’s Representative, Hon. Alpha Khan, Special Adviser to the President and Ambassador at Large reiterated

the government’s commitment to youth empowerment and employability.

The Minister of Youth Affairs, stated among others that *“violence and indiscipline of any form are not in the interest of young people and have the tendencies of undermining government strides in promoting youth development.”*

Thus, the focus of the government should be to promote youth employment and empowerment as a key strategy to enhance social cohesion. Other speakers included the Chairman of the National Youth Council and the Officer-in-Charge of UNFPA.

During the week, there were knowledge sharing sessions with youth and school pupils from

various communities on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The sessions provided information to over 100 youth who have in turn engaged approximately 100 school pupils and now serve as mentors.

Finally, a symposium was held with the aim of enhancing youth development. Discussions were held on the National Youth Service Scheme which was enacted by parliament on the 2nd of February 2016 with the assent of H. E. the President. This is important as it highlights His Excellency’s renewed commitment for national integration of graduates on youth employment in his prosperity agenda in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of **“Decent work and Economic Growth.”**

BUILDING CAPACITY TO EMPOWER YOUTH



Reaching In-School Adolescent Girls Through the HOPE Project.

UNFPA believes that investing in young people, especially adolescent girls, is one of the smartest investments a country can make to harness the Demographic Dividend. The Adolescents, Youth and Gender Cluster aims to increase the availability of adolescent and youth-friendly services (AYFS) in Sierra Leone. The main interventions include capacity building through trainings and upgrading facilities to be adolescent and youth friendly.

As part of the Irish Aid funded 'Services to Adolescent Girls' project, UNFPA supported the

Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) to train 410 Health Care Workers in 14 districts in 2016. The trained Health Care Workers were supported to visit and provide services in the learning centres established by the Ministry of Education Science & Technology (MEST) for pregnant and lactating girls. The learning centres have provided support services to over 14,000 pregnant and lactating girls and over 5,072 have returned to formal schooling. The Health Care Workers met regularly with the girls to ensure their reproductive health care needs were being taken care of.

In addition, within the 'Health, Opportunities, Protection and Empowerment (HOPE)' project funded by Irish Aid, UNFPA provided support to the National School and Adolescent Health Programme to increase the availability of adolescent and youth-friendly services in intervention areas. In 2016, six existing Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) were upgraded within the HOPE intervention areas of Western Area Rural and Port Loko. More facilities will be upgraded in the second half of 2016.

A total of 50 Health Care Workers were trained in Port Loko and Western Area Rural. Two five-day sessions were facilitated by national and district level MoHS staff using the approved AYF training kit. The Health Care Workers and the peer educators were each paired with visited schools and intervention communities reaching over 1,000 people with outreach services.

WHAT IS THE **DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND?**

A country with both increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility has the potential to reap a 'demographic dividend,' defined as a boost in economic productivity achieved by having proportionally more people of working age. The ability of young people to reach their potential (girls in particular) and for workers to have fewer dependents (as a result of voluntary family planning) are prerequisites for the dividend. The demographic dividend presents an opportunity for a clear causal line from the empowerment of young women and the delivery of SRHR to sustainable economic development.

IN FOCUS

INVESTING IN TEENAGE GIRLS

In many rural communities in Sierra Leone, young people are dropping out of school because their parents cannot afford to keep them there. Children who drop out of school early not only lose their education, but often end up having early sexual experiences.

To try and encourage children to finish their education, UNFPA supports the HOPE project, run by the Restless Development Volunteers, at the Layyah Girls' Club in Koya Chiefdom, Port Loko district. It addresses the problems of children such as Aminata Kamara, 16, by inviting them to join this community girls' club, which is also supported by Irish Aid.

Aminata had dropped out of school because her parents could not afford to meet her schooling needs and like many of her peers across rural communities in Sierra Leone, she had to walk 10 miles every day to attend school. She was often penalised as she arrived late because she had to perform household chores before leaving for school. This scared her, forcing her to decide to drop out of school with the belief that education was not for people like her. In her words, she lamented: *"I thought that I could help my parents to find money because my family had no sources of income to support my education...I was doing petty business to finance my education and eventually dropped out of school, because I could not afford to meet my schooling needs."*

The UNFPA supported programme, Voluntary Peer Educators (VPEs) promotes the concept of girl child education in the wider community through community outreach and sensitisation programmes.

In Aminata's case, these VPEs engaged her family on the importance of education and shared with them inspirational stories of prominent women in Sierra Leone, how they struggled, and how

education changed their lives. The VPEs then encouraged her parents to engage in income-generating activities such as farming to support her education, and referred Aminata to the Restless Development Youth-Friendly Resource Centre for peer advice and support.

As a result of the HOPE project, Aminata is now back at school preparing for her Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Her parents have pledged to provide their full support to her education. She has been elected by her peers to be the Public Relations Officer of her girls' club and helps communicate action points to stakeholders in Layyah Community. Aminata meets with the other girls in the club three times a week to share experiences, learn and participate in discussions on the underlying issues affecting young women and girls. *"I am thankful to the Restless Development Volunteers for changing my mind and the community for seeing the need to send girls back to school,"* she said.



Aminata Kamara, 16, happy to go back to school.

FAREWELLS TO COLLEAGUES

THE COUNTRY OFFICE SAID GOODBYE TO ITS REPRESENTATIVE AND VALUED MEMBERS OF STAFF



Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi

Dr. Ndyabangi has been reassigned as the new UNFPA Representative in Afghanistan. He served as Representative in Sierra Leone from August 2013 to February 2016. He bid farewell to staff at a colourful ceremony held in his honour at the Country Office. Dr. Ndyabangi is a physician and public health expert, with over 25 years of management and strategic planning experience. In his farewell message to staff, he said *"I will miss you and your beautiful country, but wish you, the government and our IPs well."*



Dr. Sennen Hounton

Dr. Sennen Hounton served as Officer-in-Charge of the Country Office from March-April 2016 during the transition period from Dr. Ndyabangi to Dr. Dickson. Dr. Hounton is the Senior Technical Adviser, Reproductive Health, Commodity Security Branch at UNFPA Headquarters, New York, USA. He told staff in a modest farewell programme, that *"I would like to take the time to sincerely thank you...for welcoming me in your family, for demonstrating to me why you are one of UNFPA's best business units...I have learned a lot from you, and this experience will always have a special place in my heart."*



Mr. Philippe Lust-Bianchi

Philippe Lust-Bianchi left on March 30 to take up a new appointment with UN Women at UN Headquarters, New York. Philippe served UNFPA Sierra Leone for over three years during which time he worked as a consultant and then Technical Specialist, Adolescents and Youth. He contributed significantly to the establishment of the Teenage Pregnancy Secretariat at the MoHS. He said to colleagues that: *"I would like to thank you all again for a very nice farewell; and I am very grateful for your kind words and very nice Salone outfit. I will wear it proudly in New York. All the best to all of you. I hope that we will keep in touch."*



Ms. Salma Babu

Salma Babu was H4+ (now H6) Programme Coordinator at the Country Office for close to one year. She took formal leave of UNFPA Sierra Leone at an impressive ceremony held in her honour in June. Salma was hailed at the ceremony for her dedication to duty, thoroughness and assertiveness. *"I will miss you all,"* she said. *"Thanks for the life lessons learnt."*

COUNTRY OFFICE STAFF NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



Mr. Sunil Saigal, the new UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, presents Ebola Response certificate of recognition to staff on behalf of Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director. Pictured here Abu Tarawallie receives his award.



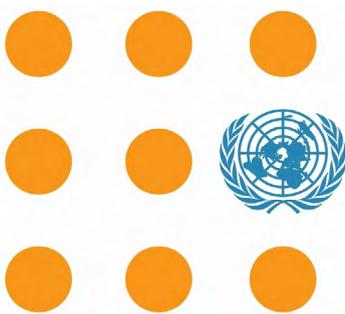
Adolescent, Youth and Gender and Women's Reproductive Health Clusters meet with CNN news anchor Isha Sesay, Founder and President of the Atlanta, USA-based 'Women Everywhere Can Lead', who visited UNFPA in January to discuss girls' and women's empowerment and leadership issues.



Mohamed Sawaneh, one of UNFPA's longest serving drivers, proudly displays a gift from the Country Office, upon receipt of his B.A. degree in Business Administration from the Institute of Advanced Management & Technology (IAMTECH) Freetown, an affiliate of Njala University, Sierra Leone.



EVD District Contact Tracing Monitors pose with UNFPA staff at the end of their invaluable service to the nation.



Sierra Leone



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