

UNFPA IN NIGERIA

Quarterly e-Newsletter

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Dear Partners,

I am pleased to present to you the second edition of UNFPA in Nigeria.

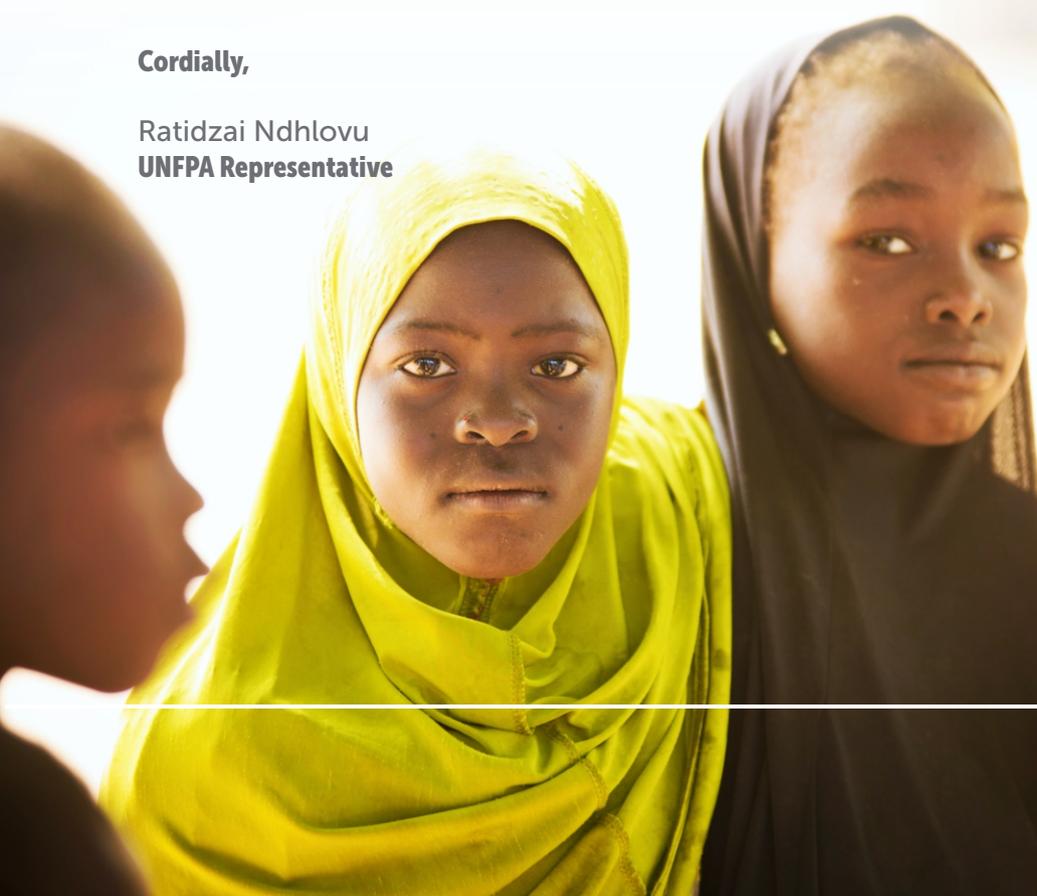
This quarter, UNFPA activities were youth centered, from the launch of the national response to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation to the global technology platform developed to promote access to comprehensive reproductive health education and the multi-sectoral youth programming in Cross Rivers State; the Fund has been relentless in ensuring that every young person's potential is fulfilled.

A significant element of this mandate is ensuring that everyone whether male or female has access to equal opportunities and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment is removed, not only within their families but also in the communities they live in and country as a whole. This is why UNFPA identified with the rejected "gender and equal opportunities bill" and urged its quick adoption when it is reintroduced to the Nigerian Senate.

I trust you will find this edition insightful and I look forward to reading your comments. Please call or send inquiries to 0905 377 9641.

Cordially,

Ratidzai Ndhlovu
UNFPA Representative



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DA SUBJECT MATTER—USING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN NIGERIA



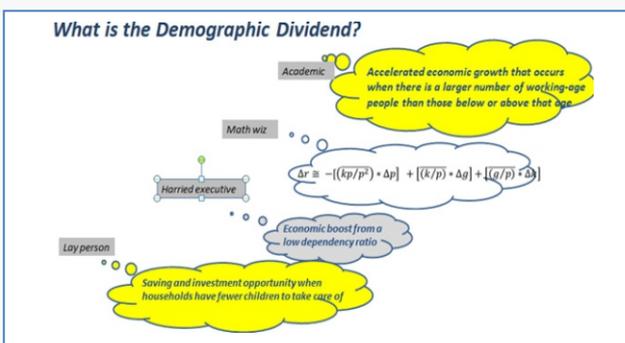
UNFPA CONVENES REGIONAL SUMMIT ON DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AFRICA AS ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS



Figure1: Image presented by Parfait M.Eloundou, Cornell University.

UNFPA CONVENES REGIONAL SUMMIT ON HARNESSING DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND IN AFRICA

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund in continuing its support to countries around the world to fulfill the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) programme of action, convened a 3-day regional leadership summit on Demographic Dividend (DD) in Africa. The summit which was organized to deepen the understanding, build institutional capacity and foster a new generation of demographic dividend experts on the continent. was held in Abuja, Nigeria's capital on 07-09 March, 2016.



Demographic Dividend is the potential for economic growth that can be experienced as a result of changes in the age structure of a population following a decline in fertility. "In Africa however, the age or economic dependency ratio is significant because of the prevalent high fertility rates", says Ratidzai Ndhlovu, the UNFPA Representative. "The major challenge facing the continent is the limited capacity of its economy to cope with the growing population of dependents including generating adequate jobs to absorb the army of young school leavers".

Nevertheless, says Dr. Benoit Kalasa, Director Technical Division, UNFPA, "strengthening the content and

implementation of national health and economic policies in relation to overarching population policies will ensure equitable access to quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as well as universal access to education, including comprehensive sexuality education".

This is important because the mitigating factors against the role of young people as agents of change within the Africa DD discourse include early and unwanted pregnancies, early marriages, limited girl child education and limited access to quality comprehensive sexuality education".

The convergence of research, policy and technical experts will advance on-going efforts to strengthen national and regional institutional capacity in demographic analysis, population and development research, and the effective translation of research into policy guidance for national governments, regional institutions and subsequent development programmes.

The regional discourse brought together representatives from National governments, research institutes, activists, private sector and the youth.



FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN NIGERIA MUST END WITHIN A GENERATION

"I hear the cry of a little girl, she cries from the pain afflicted on her, she cried yesterday, cries today and may cry tomorrow, will you help me stop the pain?" Her Excellency (H.E), Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo, the wife of the Vice President of the Republic of Nigeria gave a collective call for everyone to join the campaign to end FGM in Nigeria. Mrs. Dolapo Osinbajo represented H.E Mrs. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari, the Wife of the President.

The national response to eliminate the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/cutting in Nigeria was launched in Abuja on 09 February, 2016. The launch was a collaboration between the Federal Government of Nigeria, State Governments and the Joint UNFPA/UNICEF Programme on FGM/C Abandonment in Nigeria.

FGM/C is an extremely harmful traditional practice, documented in 28 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Little is known about the origin of the practice, which predates contemporary world religions. It is widely practiced in Nigeria, where an estimated 19.9 million Nigerian women have undergone the procedure. According to

the National Demographic Health Survey 2013, 25% of women in Nigeria have undergone FGM/C.

"It is a violation of women's reproductive rights, one that destroys her bodily integrity, perpetuated and inflicted by other women" said Mrs. Toyin Saraki, the wife of the Senate President, "It is time for us women, to think of how we can be better sisters, aunts, mothers or friends to others who are about to be victims". "It is time to say enough is enough", noted Ratidzai Ndhlovu, the UNFPA representative, "Our young girls have suffered enough from this barbaric act".

Although the practice is slowly declining, a few of the myths that perpetuate the practice are ideas that FGM/C prevents young women from becoming promiscuous or that it promotes the marriageability and fertility of the woman. "Not one of the myths surrounding this practice has any basis in truth," said Jean Gough, the UNICEF Representative, "the only truth is that on every level this is a harmful and brutal practice that has a detrimental impact on the health of women and girls."

Cecelia a 20 year old survivor almost bled to death when her clitoris was cut at the age of 18. Recounting her story at the launch of the national response, she narrated how she was tricked by her mother to visit the village. Upon her arrival, she was taken away by two strange women. On dirt floor, her legs were spread apart and tied to a tree, while a heavy woman sat on her chest. She was restrained but she struggled notwithstanding till she was cut. "The cut was too deep", Cecelia recounted with a shaking voice. With sobbing eyes she looked at her mother and the only response she got was "you are now a woman".

Representing H.E, Mrs. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari, Mrs. Osinbajo said "I urge the wives of Governors particularly those from states where this harmful practice is rampant to be the voice of the campaign to end FGM/C in their various States. We have the primary role to use our privileged positions to make lives better for Nigerians (especially women and girls). I urge you to be vocal on the need for FGM/C to end in Nigeria (within this generation) and take action that will enable this to happen".



DA SUBJECT MATTER - USING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE YOUNG PEOPLE'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN NIGERIA

From knowing about modern contraceptives to learning about healthy relationships, young people have a right to access comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education. However, they are prevented from accessing information on their sexual and reproductive health needs because of the stigma, cultural taboo and discrimination they may face. This is where Da Subject Matter comes in. Da Subject Matter is a mobile technology supported by the United Nations Population Fund and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

It is an innovative way to reach young people with the much-needed accurate and comprehensive information on sexual and reproductive health. The m-health innovation here is the use of an interactive platform that young people are savvy with, and whose data on usage demonstrates the huge potential for reach, that not only informs the youth but also refers them to quality, youth –friendly health centres.

“Adolescents and young people are the business of UNFPA” said Ratidzai Ndhlovu, UNFPA representative during the launch of the mobile platform; “the development of Da Subject Matter is a demonstration of youth

participation 'for us, with us' which compliments efforts to develop their knowledge and to support them with the much needed resource to make informed decisions about their bodies and their lives”.

“In Nigeria and around the world, young people are the future. They need our help to grow into the healthiest generation ever,” said Thank-God Okosun, Acting Country Director, Nigeria, Planned Parenthood Global. “Da Subject Matter gives them what they need”.

To view Da Subject Matter website click <https://www.dasubjectmatter.org>



UNFPA STRENGTHENS ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN THE NORTH EAST

Borno, March 31 2016 – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has flagged off the distribution of 10, 000 dignity kits to survivors of insurgency and 144 comprehensive reproductive health kits to medical facilities, including clinics in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps to respond to their reproductive health needs. This new round of distribution, to Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, is funded by the Government and People of the United States of America through USAID

“Many of us here today, have easy access to reproductive health services, but for a survivor of insurgency in an IDP camp, these needs are not easily met”, said Ms. Fatma Samoura, the UN Resident coordinator. “The comprehensive reproductive health kit distributed today will provide health birth and child spacing services for women of reproductive age, commodities for pre-natal, safe delivery and post-natal care for pregnant women, treatment of sexually transmitted diseases (STI’s) including the prevention of HIV/AIDS and the clinically management of rape”.

This support is part of a UNFPA plan to restore access to essential reproductive health services to about 4.5 million people affected by the humanitarian situation in the North East.

In addition to health kits, the peculiarity of the female gender demands that she has some basic necessities to preserve her dignity. These needs go beyond health, food and shelter to the procurement of commodities that strengthen her self-esteem in a time of crisis. To the vulnerable women and girls in a humanitarian setting, these needs include sanitary towel, soap, toothpaste, underwear, new clothes, infant blankets and others. The 10, 000 UNFPA dignity kits co-funded

by USAID will address these needs.

UNFPA has responded relentlessly to the humanitarian situation in Nigeria. In 2014, it initiated a scale-up of its ongoing response in the North East, to target a caseload of about 4.5 million people. So far, the Fund has reached 3.19 million people, assisted the safe delivery of over 37,963 pregnancies in supported health facilities, distributed 1,457 comprehensive health kits to health facilities and about 22,000 dignity kits to vulnerable IDP women and girls and host communities.

His Excellency Kashim Shettima, the Governor of Borno State acknowledged the leading role the United Nations plays in the ongoing humanitarian response in Nigeria. “The United Nations is a dependable partner in the fight against insurgency. We trust you and are confident that it is a fight that we will win” he said.

The United Nations Population Fund renews its commitment to cooperate with the people and Government of Nigeria to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

VIDEO LINK - HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN NIGERIA <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llr6Q0BVM1A>



UNFPA AND THE GUARDIAN PRESENT THE FIRST PAN-AFRICAN AWARD FOR REPORTING ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

ABJUA, Nigeria – **“My father forced me to get married to an older man almost his age. The old man gave him 20 cows. I tried to run away from that old man, but my father warned me that he would beat me to death if he was forced to return the cows he was given as payment for dowry,”** says an unnamed thirteen year-old girl, her face unseen, as she relays how she was forced to marry shortly after suffering Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), in a short film made by Kenyan journalist *Diana Kendi*.

The nine-minute film, *The Bondage of Culture*, was selected as the winner of the first-annual *Efua Dorkenoo Pan-Africa Award for Reportage on FGM*. Created in partnership by The Guardian and UNFPA, the award was named after Efua Dorkenoo, a Ghanaian advocate and pioneer in the fight against FGM.

During a ceremony on 9 February in Abjua, Nigeria, Dolapo Osinbajo, wife of Nigeria's vice president, presented Ms. Kendi with the award statue, which was handmade by Nigerian artist Godfrey Williams-Okorodus. Kendi will also receive free training at The Guardian headquarters in London.

In her film, Kendi features the stories of five survivors of FGM living in West Pokot County, Kenya, where, despite a 2011 law banning FGM nationally, the procedure remains highly prevalent.

The film also includes commentary from a former circumciser in the area who now advocates ending FGM, a head teacher at a school that houses young victims of the practice who have fled their homes and a local assistant chief who helps rescue the girls, among others.

“All of the entries were excellent, but Diana's succeeded in sharing with us the voice of the most vulnerable in remote areas, allowing survivors to tell their stories in full dignity and respect,” said Omar Gharzeddine, UNFPA media specialist, who served on the panel of judges.

The award was presented during a ceremony observing the International Day of Zero Tolerance of FGM, during which a new national response to eliminate FGM in Nigeria by 2030 was also announced.

As Africa's most populous country, Nigeria is estimated to account for approximately 15% percent of all women who have suffered FGM worldwide – the most of any country. The Nigerian government outlawed FGM in May 2015, and the high-profile ceremony, which was attended by over 300 dignitaries and politicians, signalled an increasing visibility for the issue and the fight to stop it.

“Girls faced forced marriages. They face FGM. They face unwanted pregnancy. We need to empower our girls,” said Ms. Kendi, proudly holding her award. **“The reason why I did this story about FGM is because I believe in girl empowerment. Let's stop FGM.”**



STATEMENT ON THE GENDER AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BILL

The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill deserves another look and adoption by the Senate as a further step by Nigeria towards fulfilling humanity's vision of transforming our world by 2030 to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. Such action will be one of the practicable national responses to help implement the Sustainable Development Agenda, as agreed by the world's leaders, including Nigeria's, in September 2015.

Protecting women and girls, investing in their rights and providing opportunities for them to prosper benefits not only their families, but also communities and the whole country. This vision of gender equality is not new. It is imbedded in the International Bill of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all of which Nigeria has committed to realizing.

Nigeria has provided women and girls legal claims to demand freedom from violence, discrimination or abuse on the basis of gender. However, the full enjoyment of their human rights remains elusive as they continue to face extensive discrimination that violate the principle of equality of rights.

These challenges were tackled in the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, which seeks to promote equal opportunities and counter socio-cultural

barriers that prevent women and girls from reaching their full potential. It tries to turn into reality the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, who are our very mothers, wives, sisters and daughters.

So, in accordance with world leaders' resolve that the United Nations system should partner with governments on implementing the sustainable development agenda, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, stands ready to continue helping Nigeria take action to protect the rights of women and girls. It is also ready to help the country rectify gender disparity and enable women fully exercise their human rights.

Therefore, I urge quick adoption of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill when it is reintroduced. Adopting it will be a practical step towards an ambitious global vision: A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed.



Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UN Building,
Plot 617/618
Diplomatic Drive,
Central Business District,
Abuja, FCT.

0905 3779 641