Demographic Dividend in West and Central Africa
2018 Progress Report
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On behalf of the Staff in the West and Central Africa Region, I am very pleased to share with you the 2018 Annual Report. We have entered 2019 buoyed by great successes and milestones achieved in 2018 - which marked the completion of the first year of our new four-year regional action plan, with activities and initiatives implemented in line with the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Our 2018-2021 regional action plan aims to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, and its roadmap on the Demographic Dividend.

Our activities were geared towards bolstering the region’s potential for harnessing a demographic dividend as an anchor for sustainable development. We placed emphasis on sustaining and complementing country level efforts to attain universal access to sexual and reproductive health and advancing progress towards the achievement of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Significant progress has been made in the provision of frontline reproductive health services to those in dire need, but much more still needs to be done. As part of the Ouagadougou Partnership (OP), in which UNFPA is a core partner, the coordinated interventions of the partnership’s actors have enabled an additional 1,398,000 women to access and use modern contraceptive methods (63 per cent of target by 2020), from 2016 to 2018. Furthermore, UNFPA has contributed 70% to meeting WCARO countries’ contraceptive needs in 2018, while two other partners contributed the remaining 30%.
Our various campaigns and interventions have yielded positive results with traditional, opinion, community-based and religious leaders embracing the demographic dividend ideal. Some influential local leaders, are also championing and advocating the to say “No” to child marriages narrative, supporting family planning and abandoning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Last September, at a well-attended high-level event organized on the margins of the 73rd United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York, which was officially opened by UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, the First Lady of Niger - Dr. Lalla Malika Issoufou - led various speakers to share best practices and community interventions geared at reducing child marriage, and promoting the wellbeing of women and girls.
Also in attendance was the Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem, who also delivered a speech to over 100 delegates who attended the event among them, First Ladies and heads of International Organizations.

We heralded 2018 with our presentation of the 2017 Annual Report to members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to Dakar, Senegal, as well as hosted the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, who embolden our demographic dividend message. The Special Envoy delivered a strong message to policy makers advocating for increased investment in education, and paid a courtesy visit to our FassE signature initiative- an operationalisation of the DD in a popular urban setting with highest levels of need.

We continued to solidify our partnership with faith-based and religious leaders to spur our message on demographic dividend and healthy spaced families. These are vital highlights, which reinforce my belief that if we hold true to our goals and continue to commit to this new spirit of teamwork, cooperation and partnership, we in the West and Central Africa region can prosper and become a model of excellence.

Our successful narratives continue to be told even as our support base increases. There are many triumphant stories and achievements to celebrate, but we must never ignore the drawbacks, hiccups and challenges we have faced. Surmounting these difficulties has strengthened us and refined our approaches by providing adequate lessons on interventions that work and those that stall our progress. We will no doubt continue to face even bigger challenges in 2019 and beyond. The lesson, as we now know from these setbacks, is that we learn how to be better next time.

At UNFPA-WCARO, therefore, we continue to work hard and adopt smarter inventive ways to ensure that the demographic dividend is recognized as an integral part of the framework based on the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In West and Central Africa, the large youth cohort represents a historic opportunity to introduce progress and adopt innovative solutions to ignite this change. Essential to this is to ensure young people’s rights and participation in the political, economic and
social systems, in their communities and countries, are a reality. Doing so would also give them freedom to make informed choices in many other areas of their lifestyle including sexuality and reproductive health, without the fear of violence, coercion or being discriminated against.

From my interactions with our staff, I must say we have a dynamic regional office team who are always seeking to improve our approaches so as to re-invigorate individual countries and at the same time achieving our regional strategic objectives in line with UNFPA’s global strategic plan.

We are convinced that we will only bring about sustainable change if we focus our interventions where they matter most. Our management actions are informed by high quality evaluations in line with our Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It should be noted that internally, we focused attention on enhancing capacity by filling in vacant leadership positions as well as providing high-end change management training to managers to enable them adapt to ongoing UN reforms processes and overall global change. We are pleased to announce the establishment of a Delivery Unit, to enhance service delivery as well as ensuring better coordination across the region.

This report, reminds us of the many ways how we moved forward in 2018. It showcases the major milestones we have achieved, and why we cannot relent. Let us continue the journey together, keep up the momentum and build on the progress of this past year. Above all, more support is needed to bring to scale the impact of our interventions.

We approach 2019 with intense optimism as we prepare to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) and at the same time commemorate our 50th anniversary as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA50). These are significant milestones in our calendar. They showcase our history, tell us of our journey and point us to the future. The year 2019 accords us that golden opportunity to be our best in our service delivery.

I take this opportunity to thank all our staff, partners and supporters for making 2018 memorable by delivering successfully on our mandate. Let us make 2019 even better by yielding to prosperity. After all it is our Golden Anniversary.

Mabingue Ngom,
Regional Director
UNFPA West and Central Africa
Regional Office
Regional context overview: Our Commitment and Way Forward

Our regional intervention action plan 2018-2021

2018 was the starting year of the implementation of our Regional Intervention Action Plan 2018-2021 which is fully aligned with the UNFPA-WCARO organizational strategic plan 2018-2021. Our interventions are tailored toward addressing issues peculiar to the region.

With a population estimated at 414 million people in 2016, and projected to reach one billion by 2050, the West and Central Africa (WCA) region has enormous potential, yet faces many complex and interconnected challenges - including in the health, humanitarian, demographic and economic spheres.

At 87.2 % (for the age groups 0-14 and 65 +), and with a rate of 5.2 children per woman - highest fertility rate, as well as an annual population growth estimated at 2.7 %, the WCA region has the highest dependency ratio globally. And its population is predominantly young, with almost 60 % being under the age of 24. Despite the fact that a number of countries in the region have reached the status of middle-income country, and are experiencing high growth in terms of gross domestic product, this has not translated to prosperity due to inequalities and the slow demographic transition.

The region also faces a combination of other crisis situations. For example, instability continues to plague the Sahel region. The insurgency of Boko Haram in recent years has exacerbated terrorism that threatens peace, security and stability in the Lake Chad Basin area (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria countries) and beyond—affecting approximately 17 million people. The surge of Al-Qaeda and its offshoots in the Islamic Maghreb also pose threats, having recently attacked Mali, Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire. Further, the ongoing political insta-
bility in Cameroon and the Central African Republic continues to impact neighboring countries. These situations have increased violence, caused human rights violations, undermined security, provoked mass migration and destroyed public infrastructure, particularly schools and health facilities, triggering severe food insecurity, protection and health crises. The region remains vulnerable to diseases such as malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, as well as outbreaks of Ebola, Zika virus, Buruli ulcer and others. This further weakens the fragile health system.

The UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office with its broad country level presence, universal and rights-based mandate, is leveraging its convening power to broker knowledge and provide technical assistance on sustainable development challenges, opportunities and solutions.
Advancing the SDGs, and Accelerating the Demographic Transition in WCA

↪ Repositioning Quality Midwife Training to achieve “3-Zeroes”
↪ Towards Eradicating Fistula in the Region
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↪ Population and Housing Census Vital in Harnessing Demographic Dividend
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↪ New Communications Strategy to Support Delivery of Transformative Results
↪ Blogging advances Demographic Dividend Discourse in West and Central Africa

Health workers conducting antenatal visits to pregnant women in a health facility in Chad.
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Repositioning Quality Midwife Training to achieve “3-Zeroes”

Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Indicators in West and Central Africa are some of the most worrying in the world. To improve this situation, UNFPA’s 2018-2021 strategic plan, which is in tandem with the AU’s Continental Plan for Reproductive, Sexual, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) 2016-2030 (Maputo Plan of Action), targets three (3) transformative outcomes:

- **Zero preventable maternal deaths,**
- **Zero unmet need for family planning and**
- **Zero gender-based violence.**

This will require the provision of quality care which often lacks during childbirth and postpartum, accompanied by the provision of the necessary resources, with contributions from the concerned regional States, as well as improving health professional workers’ training.

In October UNFPA-WCARO undertook one of its most ambitious and transformative programmes ever, when it launched new “Centres of Excellence” for training health workers. The project, which is aimed at midwives and nurses, was unveiled in Abidjan, as part of the Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project.

*Three new Centres of Excellence for the Masters in Nursing and Obstetrics were opened in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger at the beginning of the regional academic year in November.*
Three existing institutes in Abidjan, Bamako and Niamey were identified and up-scaled to offer the Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate system, in order to upgrade and deepen basic education by granting both midwives and nurses access to a Graduate-level degree courses over a period of four academic semesters.

Each Centre will initially train cohorts of 21 students each, coming in equal numbers from the six SWEDD countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

For the 2018-2019 academic year, 63 students from Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger will be enrolled in three different courses, namely:

- **Health Sciences Education course at the National Training Institute for Health Workers (Institut National de Formation des Agents de Santé - INFAS) in Abidjan**,  
- **Health Services Management course, which will be opened at the National Training Institute in Health Sciences (Institut national de formation en sciences de la santé - INFSS) in Bamako** and finally  
- **Gyneco-Obstetric course at the National School of Public Health (École Nationale de Santé Publique - ENSP)/Damouré Zika in Niamey**.

This comprehensive initiative has dual intentions. On one hand, it makes it possible to give future prospects to young people who have an interest in the medical vocation, and wish to be part of the medical profession, and on the other, it is aimed at changing attitudes and perceptions about professions that are too often undervalued or difficult to get into. By attracting more students and providing them with the opportunity for a modern and high-quality education, with access to sophisticated modern equipment such as manikins to help in the study of the human anatomy; e-learning opportunities and work placements. The SWEDD project also supports a new generation of qualified health professionals in the field of maternal and child health.

In addition to the Centres of Excellence, the project has supported the maternal health unit in the production of a handbook on the clinical mentoring of midwives. This handbook will be used to train Senior Mentors at the ENSP in Nouakchott, Mauritania, which has been selected to house the Regional Reference Centre for the Clinical Mentoring of Midwives.
Towards Eradicating Fistula in the Region

Obstetric Fistula remains a major concern in developing countries, where it is estimated that more than two million women and girls are victims. The eradication of obstetric fistula has been a priority for UNFPA since it launched the Global Campaign to Eliminate Fistula in 2003. However, in the West and Central Africa region there are still many challenges, including lack of comprehensive data.

While the exact number of women with Obstetric Fistula in the region is not known, they are estimated to be 1,000,000 victims, with 46% of them in Nigeria alone. The incidence rate is around 30,000 new cases per year.

Fistula, child marriage, early pregnancy and female genital mutilation are all interrelated. Child marriage is a growing concern in Africa and particularly in West Africa where over 40% of girls are married before their 15th birthday. Female genital mutilation in West Africa, for example, affects 44% of girls aged 15 to 19 years.

The high incidence of child marriage in the region is a serious concern, as it contributes to high fertility rates, not to mention the disastrous consequences of early pregnancy on their health and development, including the risk of deaths resulting from early pregnancy complications, and the occurrence of obstetric fistula.

The UNFPA-WCARO partnered with the Institute for Training and Research in Urology and Family Health (IFRU-SF) to host the 5th Urological Meeting in Dakar (URODAK18). The Congress was preceded by practical training workshops for urologists, oncologists and gynecologists at Grand-Yoff General Hospital in mid-April 2018.

It meeting brought together national and international experts from the United States, France, England and African countries who shared best practices and experiences in new treatment techniques of obstetric fistula but also new cancer management techniques. Senegal’s Minister of Health and Social Action Mr. Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, officially opened the Dakar Meeting in the presence of Ms. Beatrice Mutali then Deputy Regional Director of the UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office.
“Fistula, which has been virtually eliminated in wealthier countries, is a serious human rights violation, a reflection of health systems’ failures, and a tragic sign of global social injustice and inequity.” UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem said on the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula. “Since 2003, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, leader of the global Campaign to End Fistula, has, with its partners, supported nearly 100,000 life-transforming surgeries to heal the physical and psychological wounds of fistula survivors. UNFPA is committed to ending fistula within a generation, and we call upon the world to join us in this bold endeavor.”

The implementation of the recommendations of the Fistula Resource Mobilization Regional Technical Meeting held in Banjul under the leadership of the First Lady of the Gambia Mrs. Fatoumatta Barrow buttressed the deliberations of URODAK 2018.
Overcoming Limited Availability of Reproductive Health Products

Over the past two years, the monitoring and evaluation aspects entrenched in UNFPA-WCARO’s operational mandate have shown that the main weakness in sexual and reproductive health services (SRHS) indicators in West and Central African countries revolve around the limited availability of reproductive health products in service centers.

Overcoming this challenge in West and Central Africa will contribute in achieving one of the key transformative goals of UNFPA-WCARO. It is in pursuing this goal that WCARO hosted a regional workshop, in Dakar, Senegal, in June, 2018 to find urgent and long-term sustainable solutions on strengthening procurement and supply chain management systems for reproductive health products (RHP).

Availability and access to Reproductive Health commodities such as contraceptives, essential medicines for emergency obstetric and neonatal care, safe and effective equipment play a vital role in promoting sexual and reproductive health and associated rights.

Participation was drawn from all the focal points of the 23 UNFPA Country Offices of West and Central Africa. They all came together with an aim of ensuring the availability of reproductive health products including contraceptives at the “last mile” and, ultimately, the countries in the region to do so in a self-sufficient way.

West and Central Africa region scores lower critical levels of indicators in areas related to sexual and reproductive health placing the region far behind all others globally and hence needing problem-solving strategies.
Fully aware of all these weaknesses and boldly confronting the numerous challenges facing it, the region found it necessary to develop a regional action plan to strengthen reproductive health procurement and supply chain management systems.

The WCARO strategically used the workshop to adopt practical ingenious approaches in developing an action plan. This will serve as a reference while ensuring a regional synergy of transformation towards the effective security of sexual and reproductive health products in the perspective of achieving the three transformational objectives of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The triple objectives are:

- **Zero preventable maternal deaths;**
- **Zero unmet need for FP; and**
- **Zero GBV and other harmful practices**

Attainment of these triple objectives combines with the “leave-no-one-behind” aspiration of the Sustainable Development Goals.
Catalytic partnership: Muskoka Renews Trust

The French Muskoka Fund (FFM), planned over 5 years and then extended to 2 additional years, was confirmed in 2018, following its good results, for a new 5-year cycle (2018-2022) for an amount of 10 million euros per year, including 3 million euros for UNFPA. Initially created in 2010 to improve the health of mothers, newborns, children, and adolescents and youth planned for five years, was extended for another two years.

Also announced in 2018 is Denmark’s entry into the Muskoka mechanism, with the first financial allocation expected in early 2019, thus opening the door to a broader and stronger Muskoka for the years to come in the region.

UNFPA chaired the FFM Technical Committee in 2018, and hosted the last meeting of the year in Dakar, offering an opportunity to take stock of the previous year and plan the new phase of the mechanism.

In 2018, the FFM contributed to increase its support for the implementation of functional networks of EmONC structures in countries, together with other programmes such as SWEDD, MHTF and UNFPA Supplies. The Muskoka Fund also contributed to building staff capacity on AYSRH, as well as echoing the voice of teenagers and young people.

Meanwhile, the SBCC campaign continues through the popular TV programme, “C’est la vie!”

The French Muskoka Fund (FFM) is funding provided by France, in response to an urgent call for action during the G8 Summit in Canada. It is being implemented by four UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNWOMEN and UNFPA) in eight countries and at regional level.
New Communications Strategy to Support Delivery of Transformative Results

As part of advocacy efforts to support the delivery of the three transformative results of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, and the SDGs, media, advocacy and communication professionals at both the regional and country offices conceptualized, designed and adopted a communication strategy. The strategy was preceded by comprehensive communications capacity and needs assessment, which included a public opinion survey.

Findings of the assessment and survey informed the design of the strategy which is already being implemented to ensure that UNFPA is, and is seen to be bold, vocal and visible.
UNFPA-WCARO Adapts Change Management Training to Enhance Service Delivery

Another notable success in 2018, was the Change Management Training workshop aimed at UNFPA Representatives from all the 23 country representatives and the second retreat that targeted communication officers from the regional and country offices. This certified training workshops hosted in Banjul, equipped all the 23 UNFPA representatives with the requisite knowledge in readiness for its renewed role in the region.

“Africa is changing, the world is changing, UNFPA must change to deliver the results we desire as per Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063” – said Mr Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director of UNFPA-WCARO at the opening of the Change Management Training workshops.

These two meetings took place in a decisive context for UNFPA in West and Central Africa - with the backdrop of reform taking place within the United Nations system.
Population and Housing
Census Vital in Harnessing
Demographic Dividend

In light of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses covering the period of 2015-2024, UNFPA West and Central Africa-Regional Office held a five-day capacity building workshop on the process of the general population and housing census of West and Central Africa region and its links to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

In attendance were 60 government census managers, statisticians and SDGs focal point officials coming from 16 countries in the region that will implement the 2020 census round during the period 2018-2021. The census countries are Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, São Tomé & Principe, Sierra Leone and Togo including Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This workshop was synonymous with UNFPA-WCARO’s objective of providing technical support to help countries obtain quality data and statistical information in line with international norms.

It is imperative that the results of this round of census are made available. The availability of this data will enable access, analysis and timely utilization to inform development planning and decision-making at national and local levels. Most importantly accessibility will inform investments in youth and women on how best to harness the demographic dividend.

The general population and housing census is crucial as it provides data up to the finest detail of geographic disaggregation. The generation, availability and utilization of such quality data will facilitate South-South cooperation and ensure the monitoring of the operationalization of the AU Roadmap on the Demographic Dividend as well as the development and implementation of plans and programmes, at all levels of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU’s Agenda 2063.
Blogging advances
Demographic Dividend
Discourse in West and Central Africa

For the past three years, UNFPA-WCARO has considered the demographic dividend as its strategic focus in Africa. In January 2016, with the support of UNFPA, the AU Heads of State and Government committed to a roadmap, to intensify investments in favor of youth as the main lever for the development of the demographic dividend (DD).

However, despite the many high level advocacy campaigns and policy dialogues around the dividends to be gained from the regional demographic architecture, the concept is not popular in education and research institutions, media and even among young people both in and out-of school, despite the fact that they are the main levers needed to harness the demographic dividend. It was therefore important to identify ways and means and come up with better strategies to make the demographic dividend concept more accessible.

In this regard, UNFPA-WCARO created a virtual platform to foster communication exchange, stimulate debate, improve understanding and knowledge and popularize the demographic dividend among the identified interest groups. This is what inspired the idea of a DDBlog - more so taking into consideration that the youth are digital and ICT-savvy. This virtual platform constitutes the DD Blog and is animated by influencers of public knowledge who will post publications of researchers, journalists or opinions open on it.

Establishing the blog as an interactive communication tool to advance the demographic dividend message was part of UNFPA-WCARO’s strategy to embrace technology as a means of broadcasting the demographic dividend message. The main objective of the DD-Blog is to attract attention of young people in particular, and the public in general to the issues of capturing the demographic dividend for better appropriation of this concept, with the aim of influencing development agendas, and contributing to the vision 2018-2021.
The stakeholders’ engagement around the demographic dividend is mainly conducted through concerted advocacy and sensitization campaigns using traditional media outlets and social media activities which have wider reach. This strategy is working well as the public is now more informed on the demographic dividend concept.
**Diplomacy and High-Level Policy Dialogue**

- **Niger’s Bold High-Level Summit Tackles Child Marriage and Promotes Women and Girls**
- **High-Level Demographic Dividend Event Enhances Status of Women and Girls**

UNFPA-WCARO opened 2018 on a high-note as it presented its 2017 annual progress report on the state of the demographic dividend to the African Group of Ambassadors in Dakar, in late February.

Presenting this report to members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to Dakar, Senegal is in recognition of the role played by African diplomats in facilitating the harnessing of the demographic dividend. The Demographic Dividend in West and Central Africa: 2017 Progress Report which was presented to the diplomatic corps outlines the interventions of UNFPA-WCARO and its partners throughout the year in the 23 countries of the West and Central Africa region. The presentation also discussed the demographic prospects and challenges predicted for 2018 as well as the vital link that the African Diplomatic Corps play in facilitating continental policy intervention to harness the demographic dividend.
Niger’s Bold High-Level Summit Tackles Child Marriage and Promotes Women and Girls

Niger is making significant strides after committing considerable resources in harnessing the demographic dividend, reducing child marriages, shrinking early teenage pregnancies and increasing the use of family planning services.

These were the highlights presented at a high-level side-event on the margins of the 73rd session of the General Assembly in New York in September 2018, led by Niger under the patronage of the country’s First Lady, Dr. Lalla Malika Issoufou, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) West and Central Africa Regional Office.

UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, officially opened the event. The Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem together with other dignitaries, including President Alpha Conde of Guinea, the ECOWAS Chairperson, WHO Director-General, then Secretary-General of the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström, among other high ranking officials spoke at the event. Over 100 delegates attended the event, including several First Ladies and heads of International Organisations.

Dr Issoufou led various speakers to share best practices and community interventions geared at reducing child marriage and promoting women and girls’ well-being that has largely contributed to the reduction of the fertility rate in Niger.

The session showcased the best practices and community interventions that have enabled the country to improve the well-being of women and girls, leading to a reduction in the fertility rate from 7.6 to 6 children per woman. How the country is overcoming its main challenges and developing successful community interventions, which are now acting as bench-marks on best practices for other countries...
in the region, is the new narrative from Niger, and the interventions undertaken through the stewardship of the President of Niger H.E Mahamadou Issoufou and the strong involvement and dedication of the First Lady have reduced child marriage, improved enrollment and retention rates of girls in school and increased contraceptive access for adolescent girls. The results achieved are long-standing commitment to efforts that started three years ago when the Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) initiative was rolled out.

Through the implementation of groundbreaking community-based interventions such as “Husbands’ Schools,” and “Safe Spaces” for adolescent girls, prevention, treatment and socio-economic reintegration of victims have set an example within Niger, which is being replicated regionally.
In November 2018, UNFPA sponsored a high-level meeting on the demographic dividend and empowerment of women and girls in Dakar Senegal. At this high-level meeting, the UNFPA Regional Director said “Women face difficulties in accessing the financial instruments and loans essential to the success of their businesses and to improving their living standards”.

Addressing the challenge raised by Mr. Ngom, a strong commitment was reaffirmed by the Ministers of West and Central African countries to strengthen their advocacy efforts towards national parliaments and opinion leaders, to pay particular and more sustained attention to issues related to national policies aimed at women’s empowerment and gender equality, with a view to contributing to the success of our nations’ demographic transition with a view to harnessing the demographic dividend to better accelerate economic growth.

Cross-section of heavy attended at the opening ceremony of the high-level conference on women’s empowerment
- Dakar, Senegal, Nov 2018. © UNFPA
Engaging Key Partners to Achieve Transformational Change

- Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Well-being
- Traditional Communicators Create Regional Network
- Prestigious UNFPA Population Awareness Communication Award goes to El Hadj Mansour Mbaye
- UN Special Envoy on Youth Tours Senegal, Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria
- Embracing Youth Networks and Leaders as Partners in West and Central Africa
- UNFPA Supports African Youth SDGs Summit in Ghana
- Civil Society Organizations Critical for Holding Government and Partners Accountable in Africa
- Civil Societies Bestow Esteemed Award to Regional Director

Muslim religious leaders of Nigeria at the conference on "Harnessing the demographic dividend for sustainable development of Nigeria: the role of Muslim religious leaders" in Abuja, officially opened by the Vice President of the Republic of Nigeria Prof. Yemi Osinbajo – Abuja, Nigeria, Aug 2018. © UNFPA
Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Well-being

Partnership between UNFPA WCARO with religious leaders and Faith Based Organisations which started in 2015 continued in 2018. Together, we carried out a number of triumphant initiatives to increase the population’s understanding of the need to harness the demographic dividend and enhance family well-being.

UNFPA-Nigeria organized the largest conference of Muslim religious leaders to discuss their role in demographic dividend. The two-day conference was officially opened by the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo.

About 200 Islamic religious leaders from across the country converged in Abuja in September 2018 for a two-day forum under the theme “Harnessing Demographic Dividend (DD) for Sustainable Development of Nigeria: The Role of Muslim Religious Leaders.”

The Abuja meeting noted challenges that needed to be addressed urgently which included sustained advocacy and non-involvement of other Faith-based organisations with a view of co-opting them and replenishing the demographic dividend advocacy. The symposium also discussed opportunities such as advancing the agenda for domestic resource mobilization, increased policy dialogues and championing high level government advocacy.

The high-powered deliberations culminated in, the leaders reaching consensus around sensitive issues such as family planning and propelling the demographic dividend message. They also pledged to lead a radical social norm change, that will transform Nigeria and act as a beacon for the region. The conference provided a much-needed opportunity to galvanize consent and enhance the capacity of the influential religious leaders to advocate for policies and programmes towards harnessing Demographic Dividend in Nigeria and the wider West and Central African region.
Traditional Communicators Create Regional Network

The establishment of the Regional Network of Traditional Communicators in West and Central Africa was the key outcome of the regional conference on “Partnership for Culture, Communication and the Demographic Dividend”. This network is responsible for promoting and coordinating the implementation of an action plan to accelerate social transformation conducive to accelerate the demographic dividend in West and Central African countries.

A regional conference was co-organized by the Ministry of Culture of Senegal, the UNFPA Regional Office and the Country Office to highlight the crucial role of traditional raconteurs and customary leaders in the implementation of the African Union Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend.

The meeting was a key moment to highlight the catalytic role of culture and communication in social and economic transformations. It also served as a framework for defining a strategic partnership between the Ministers of Culture of the countries in the sub-region and UNFPA.

The Dakar conference was all-inclusive and brought together around 300 participants, including traditional communicators, religious and traditional leaders, representatives of women’s organizations, as well as young people, parliamentarians and journalists from the region’s 14 countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Central African Republic, Senegal, and Togo. Culture ministers from the 14 countries also attended.

The conference which was held in late November 2018 also saw the creation of a regional network of traditional communicators, religious and traditional leaders who adopted a guiding and operational statute and appointed a pioneer executive board.

“Partnership for Culture, Communication and the Demographic Dividend” conference was a follow up to an earlier high-level forum that took place in Conakry, in the Republic of Guinea in May. The Conakry symposium which was opened by, His Excellency President Prof. Alpha Conde had brought together traditional communicators from eight countries in the region namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Senegal. The resolutions of the Conakry conference adopted a Declaration and a Roadmap with a key action agenda, which was to organize a regional conference and establish a regional network of traditional communicators.

The formation of a regional network is meant to bolster support of the implementation of the country action plans and cascading with UNFPA’s transformation agenda.
Prestigious UNFPA Population Awareness Communication Award goes to El Hadj Mansour Mbaye

The 91-year-old Senegalese traditional communications legend, El Hadj Mansour Mbaye, is the first recipient of the premier UNFPA-WCARO Special Distinction Medal.

Mbaye who is the founding president of the National Network of Traditional Communicators (RENACOT) of Senegal, was one of the first traditional communicators to be honored. His citation acknowledges Mbaye’s commitment to the promotion of good health for mother and child and family planning, with a view of eliminating preventable maternal deaths and harmful practices in Senegal.

Senegal’s Culture Minister, Abdou Latif Coulibaly, who presided over the glitzy award ceremony which took place at the Grand Theater, in the capital, Dakar described El Hadj Mbaye as an outstanding communicator who has contributed enormously to the socio-cultural development of Senegal. UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Director, Mabingue Ngom, said the choice of El Hadj Mansour Mbaye for this premiere UNFPA Regional Award was for his dedicated contribution to promoting reproductive health and family planning for over half a century. He described the laureate as a deeply humanistic raconteur, first amongst his peers, whose thoughts and deeds have promoted policies and programs to improve the lives of his people by eliminating socio-cultural barriers to access to quality health services.

“Our homage to the ‘son of the lion’ is the recognition of the universality of civilization that could not be without giving and receiving, without rooting and openness,” Ngom said as he paid tribute to El Hadj Mbaye describing him as an eminent thinker and thespian.

The award ceremony also served as a closing ceremony of a regional conference on “Partnership for Culture, Communication and the Demographic Dividend” that was organized by the Ministry of Culture of Senegal, and UNFPA to highlight the crucial role of traditional communicators in the implementation of the African Union Roadmap to harness the Demographic Dividend.
El Hadj Mansour Mbaye (center), president of Senegal’s traditional communicators First recipient of the UNFPA Award for Awareness on Population and Maternal Health Issues.
© UNFPA
UN Special Envoy on Youth Tours Senegal, Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria

2018 also saw the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake made a whirlwind tour in the region, visiting Senegal, Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria to boost UNFPA-WCARO campaign on harnessing the demographic dividend for positive change.

The multi-pronged visit by the Special Envoy included high-profile meetings with Heads of States and Governments among other dignitaries and also grassroots interactive sessions with adolescents and women groups. Her message was in sync with UNFPA-WCARO strategy on the importance of investing in youth to harness the demographic dividend in the region.

“Investing more in education is fundamental if we are to achieve the demographic dividend.” Wickramanayake said as she launched a project in Senegal to operationalize the demographic dividend in a popular urban setting.

**Senegal**

On her visit to Senegal Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake called on the international community to fully support the implementation of a pilot project on the operationalization of the demographic dividend in FASS County, a district of the suburbs of Dakar. The FASS pilot project is an innovative initiative that aims to operationalize the demographic dividend in an urban context. It is a partnership between the FASS County in Dakar and UNFPA, focusing on issues of women’s empowerment, health, education and youth employment.
The Mayor of FASS, Ousmane Ndoye, told the nearly 500 guests at the event that the pressure of population growth expected to reach 20% in 10 years and the high unemployment rate among the young people of which 75% are under 35 years were among the challenges that the project seeks to address.

The Gambia

During her visit to The Gambia, Ms. Wickramanayake met with the President of The Gambia, H.E. Mr. Adama Barrow and commended his government on launching the **National Development Strategy (2018 – 2021)**, which lists youth empowerment as a fundamental strategic priority. The meeting also focused on the challenges that youth unemployment poses in the country, the need to promote skills development and civic education, and the role of the UN in providing guidance for programmes on youth development and empowerment.
The Envoy also met the Vice President of The Gambia, H.E. Ms. Fatoumata Tambajang and they discussed the importance of investing in youth to harness the demographic dividend in the country, where 64% of its population is under 25. The need to mainstream gender equality in youth development efforts and ensure the empowerment of young women and girls were also key points raised during their discussion.

Ms. Wickramanayake also spoke at the opening of the Second International Forum on Developing Strategies to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). With more than 200 million young girls and women having experienced some form of genital mutilation, the youth envoy, termed this violent practice “Unacceptable in the 21st century”.

“This is the best time to be a young person,” Ms Wickramanayake said. She noted that with the changing world of work, young people must embrace the challenge of new skills demanded by an evolving labor market space.

Ghana

The Envoy met with the Minister of Youth and Sports in Ghana, H.E. Isaac Asiamah and discussed areas of convergence and opportunities to advance the youth development agenda both in Ghana and at the level of the United Nations.

The highlight of the visit was meeting and dancing with Kayayei girls who work as head-porters at Agbogbloshie market, a crowded, local market and informal settlement, in Accra. The Kayayei are predominantly teenage girls, some of whom have moved from rural areas to the city, looking for employment opportunities and ways to escape child marriage, and work in the market as head-porters for customers. The nature of their work and the environment they operate in, puts them at considerable risk. They are susceptible to gender-based and sexual violence, including rape, and are at high risk of unplanned pregnancies.
Despite these challenges, the Kayayei have bonded in an association and through a local organization—PAYDP, and with support from UNFPA and other partners, have built a day-care centre that provides a safe space for their young children whilst they work. The Youth Envoy was deeply moved by the resilience displayed by the Kayayei girls, who are amongst some of the most marginalized youth in Ghana, and shared with them a message of hope and encouragement as well as gratitude for sharing their deeply personal stories.

Nigeria

In Nigeria, Ms Wickramanayake, had the honor to meet three government ministers and senior UNFPA representatives who noted that the most prominent challenges young people face in the country, ranged from limited opportunities for youth empowerment, lack of access to education for girls, skills deficit, unemployment and irregular migration. Aware of the urgency of resolving these issues, the government, together with partnering organizations like UNFPA, has launched a number of programs and initiatives to tackle them such as the Civic Innovation (CI) Hub in Abuja, which offers a great example of how young people are using technology and innovation to address social challenges.

At a Town Hall Meeting the Youth Envoy met more than 250 young Nigerians and discussed the role of young people in anchoring the demographic dividend to achieve SDGs. She also visited the Waru community in Abuja and spoke with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the conflict in North East Nigeria, where the extremist group Boko Haram is active. A number of partners, including UNFPA in Nigeria are working with the community to ensure access to services and materials support to the displaced families.

The Waru community is unique with respect to the resettlement of Internally Displaced people (IDPs) in Nigeria as it follows a maxim whereby displaced families are spread among other families in the community they reside in, while rebuilding their lives.
In 2018, UNFPA further stratified its commitment to adolescents and youth in the region when it led in the development and production of a Status Report on Adolescents and Youth, which provides the latest data, evidence and analysis on the key education, health, employment, and gender concerns impacting Adolescents and Youth in the region. The Report is a veritable guide for policy makers, programme implementers, decision makers, young people and other key stakeholders to use the latest evidence to develop policies and programmes that respond to the needs of young people and in partnership with young people.

The UNFPA-WCARO has strongly advocated for what has now become evident among key stakeholders in Africa - that the demographic dividend framework offers a strategic basis for focusing and prioritizing investments in people in general, and youth in particular, in order to achieve sustainable development. UNFPA supported the Africa Union, along with the African Development Bank, NEPAD and others, to develop the AU’s Roadmap on the Demographic Dividend, which was endorsed at the AU Summit in January 2017 putting the youth at the center of Africa’s development agenda. UNFPA advocates and engages in high-level policy dialogue with key players on the demographic dividend, and have systematically continued to call for **Putting Young People First** in this process.
UNFPA Supports African Youth SDGs Summit in Ghana

Africa’s population is predominantly made up of young people. In West and Central Africa, with almost 60% of population under the age of 24, young people are the most precious resource of the region. It is often said that Africa can only thrive if the young people thrive.

The UNFPA supported the second African Youth SDGs Summit which was held in Accra, Ghana, in November 2018. Attended by over 1,000 delegates, the gathering is turning out to be one of the largest youth platforms in Africa.

Given his efforts in promoting a culture of results and innovation, and taking initiatives to address complex development challenges affecting young people, the UNFPA-WCARO Regional Director, Mabingue Ngom, was invited as the Special Honoured Speaker at the event, and he focused his address on the theme: “Partnership with Youth to Achieve the SDGs: Moving from Policy to Actions.”

“The potential of the youth will only be realized when we invest in their education, health, skills and empowerment, as well as provide them with a conducive environment wherein they can make informed choices.” Mabingue said. “These investments together are the pre-conditions sine qua non for Africa harnessing its demographic dividend.”

The event which started in 2017 as a forum to analyse, discuss and promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in light of Africa’s transformation agenda, also serves as a parley to explore ways of harnessing the massive demographic dividend inherent in Africa.

The African Youth SDGs Summit is envisaged as an annual event that also aims at elevating the African youth voices, concerns and insights so as to unleash the potential of the youth to play active roles for co-generation of ideas and awareness on the SDGs and Agenda 2063.
Civil Society Organizations Critical for Holding Government and Partners Accountable in Africa

Africa needs the contribution of its Civil Society to drive its 2063 transformation agenda. As part of the Five-Year Review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD),

African Civil Society Organisations gathered in Accra Ghana, for a “CSO Pre-Conference”, to add their voices to the regional review process. The African Union Commission, with the support of its partners, including the UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), organized the Accra CSO Pre-Conference.

Addressing the opening of the pre-conference, the Deputy Regional Director of UNFPA-WCARO, Dr. Mamadou Kante, said that the AADPD was adopted five years ago, in recognition of the centrality of population and development in the forward-march towards sustainable development. Since then, Dr. Kante noted that, it has been agreed by key AU and UN structures, that the reviews of Agendas 2063 and 2030 shall take into consideration the outcomes of major UN conferences at the regional level such as the AADPD. Dr Kante highlighted that, it is extremely critical that civil society continues to play its role as a barometer for accountability and for results. He explained that the CSOs help to ensure accountability of government and civil society actors, as this will be an important determinant of the collective success registered.

“The bold gains made in the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs, including the targets on access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; gender equality and women’s empowerment; the commitment to ‘leave-no-one-behind’ will only be achieved if we work together, with renewed conviction, to change the narrative as it has been.” Dr. Kante said.
Civil Societies Bestow Esteemed Award to Regional Director

Ahead of the annual meeting of the Ouagadougou Partnership, the CROSCPF organized a working dinner in mid-December where the Regional Director for UNFPA in West and Central Africa, Mabingue Ngom was awarded with a rare Distinction Award. Mabingue was awarded during the seventh annual meeting of the Ouagadougou Partnership Coordination Unit (UCPO) that took place in December, in Dakar, Senegal.

This distinction award is in recognition of the successful regional leadership of Mr. Mabingue, in promoting women, strengthening families and facilitating youth empowerment to harness demographic dividend in West Africa.
Remarkable Success of the SWEDD Project

Community-based Approaches Transforming Girls and Boys into Social Change Agents
Leveraging Social and Behavior Change Communication in Family Health Messaging
Music Popularises Demographic Dividend Message in the Sahel
UNFPA Unveils Demographic Dividend Observatories

The SWEDD encouraging results are at the origin of the demand for temporal and spatial extension of the project. AU Member States and the International Community have expressed the wish to see the SWEDD project strengthened and extended to all the Sahelian countries and beyond. This request was inspired by the positive impact of the interventions on the issues of peace and security during the Addis-Ababa Declaration on Population and Development Five-Year Review held in Accra, Ghana.

However, the programmatic extension of the project nevertheless requires additional investments and scaling-up partnerships, particularly with the Private sector. Thus, a high-level public-private partnership forum was organized in December, in Abidjan, (Cote d'Ivoire) to raise awareness among the Private sector of the need for financial support, and foster strategic collaborations.

Ivorian Minister of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and the Fight Against Poverty, Professor Mariatou Koné at the SWEDD public-private partnership conference on harnessing the demographic dividend in the Sahel - Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, Dec 2018. © UNFPA
Community-based Approaches
Transforming Girls and Boys into Social Change Agents

The “safe spaces” and the “husband-to-be schools” which are two novel SWEDD projects were up-scaled in 2018. These two win-win empowerment strategies are a bulwark of SWEDD’s continued quest of implementing UNFPA’s three transformational goals of Zero preventable maternal deaths; Zero unmet need for family planning and Zero gender-based violence and harmful practices including child marriage.

The SWEDD project introduced two major innovative ideals deployed through a community-based approach to transform girls and boys into agents of social change. Being identified as a social change agent means they are being prepared adequately to overcome vulnerability, act independently and responsibly and participate in community development initiatives. These are the “Safe spaces” and “husband-to-be schools” ideals, which have introduced four dimensions of personal development:

**Knowledge,**

**Skills (acquisition of information and skills through modular sessions and literacy classes),**

**Konsent (development of self-esteem and respect for others) and**

**Power (acquisition of capacities and resources to guarantee empowerment and gender equality).**
This interactive and participatory approach introduced by the SWEDD project overcomes the segmented approach to target groups, whose needs vary greatly. The community approach involves changing social norms to develop life and reproductive health skills and to empower those involved so that they can be responsible.

The “safe space” is designed as a “liberty zone” that welcomes 100 girls, of which two thirds are aged between 9 and 14 years and the remaining third are aged 15 to 19. These are girls who have not had the chance to access school or who are out of school, vulnerable and at risk of being married before reaching the age of 18. The “safe spaces” strategy is structured around a three-dimensional intervention encompassing the girl, her community and institutions.

The core aim delves on reducing child marriages, by delaying them to the minimum age of 18, reduce early teenage pregnancies and increase the use of family planning services. The first line of intervention targets adolescent girls through weekly modular sessions over a time frame of 6 months, with training on life skills, health, hygiene and reproductive health. The skills development includes economic empowerment and vocational training with a view to changing their behavior and embrace empowerment, enlightenment and responsibility.

Communal action is the second line of intervention geared at shifting social norms to enhance the development of adolescent girls to assist them to explore their potential.

The third line of intervention seeks to build partnership bridges with government and civil society on all civic affairs concerns.

640 Safe spaces 
102,600 Out-of-school girls and young women reached
Among the six SWEDD countries, the “safe spaces” concept which was launched in Niger in 2013 under the theme “Initiative for Adolescent Girls - Knowledge for Dignity” has now grown to 640 safe spaces with 300 others expected to be opened soon.

The other five SWEDD countries are trialing the model with impressive results:

- **Burkina Faso → 243**
- **Chad → 394**
- **Cote d’Ivoire → 2065**
- **Mauritania → 246**
- **Mali → 172**

It is projected that these safe spaces will reach 102,600 out-of-school girls and young women and that by close of 2019, there will be 4,060 safe spaces involving 104,932 girls and young women.

To reduce gender inequalities, the husbands and “husbands-to-be” clubs have also been set up. These male forums act as platforms for accurate and comprehensive information exchange. They are designed as spaces to forge voluntary discussions and actions so as to instill community responsibility among the men folk and encourage peer-to-peer counselors. The objective is to promote the involvement of men, who hold decision-making power within the family units and wider community especially as it concerns the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and gender equality.

1,640 husband and husband-to-be clubs set up \( \rightarrow \) 49,200 people reached

Malian President Ibrahima Boubacar Keïta welcomed representatives of SWEDD Member States, World Bank representative, UNFPA Regional Director in the margins of the Regional Steering Committee of the project - Bamako, Mali, April 2018.

© UNFPA
Presently 1,640 husband and husband-to-be clubs are being set up with an expected outcome of 49,200 people reached.

These two interventions are contributing to the acceleration of the demographic transition and leading to the attainment of the demographic dividend which will enable SWEDD countries to boost economic and social development.
Leveraging Social and Behavior Change Communication in Family Health Messaging

The core of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) is based on the analysis of the Sahel sub region overall context, focusing on health, social, economic and demographic indicators. It also covers the status of women and girls as well as the communication environment. As a result of one of its objectives, the Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project has developed and adopted a SBCC Regional Strategy 2017-2019. This strategy, a crucial pillar supporting the project, defines the communication methods and actions to be implemented to reach the defined targets and proposes a coordination framework complete with a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

To validate the SBCC regional strategy more than 100 actors and actresses from the six SWEDD countries of Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad were mobilized. SBCC communication experts were joined together with religious and traditional leaders; representatives of women and youth organisations, parliamentary networks; technical and financial partners – including The World Bank, UNFPA and the West African Health Organisation – to launch the strategy activities and roadmap. This strategy is proactively and productively being implemented through campaigns in the six countries and at the regional level.

The SBCC regional campaign, therefore, is a reinforcement of the national SBCC campaigns implemented by the six SWEDD countries while taking into account the challenges related in particular, to the cultural differences between the targets of a campaign covering such a large region and the dispersed media landscape.

Among the factors contributing to a successful campaign is the use of fiction to drive behavioral change and its spread to several leading media in the region. By
emotionally engaging the audience, it was important to let them judge the attitudes and behaviours by the main characters in the campaigns, in order to enable them to discuss and adopt them. Over a five-month period, the SWEDD spots were estimated to have been seen by an audience of more than 281,125,949 people on TV5, Novelas TV, Nollywood, A+, Trace TV, among others, as well as on digital platforms such as Facebook. The renowned musician Sidiki Diabaté also contributed to the campaign through a spot of awareness on the importance of education for girls.

The importance UNFPA attaches to altering behavioural changes in the sub-region remains essential considering the social, political, economic, cultural and demographic dynamics West and Central African regions experienced in the region.

This strategy, accredited for much of UNFPA-WCARO’s successes in the last 24-months is expected to run till 2019.
Music Popularises Demographic Dividend Message in the Sahel

The Afro-diva songster Coumba Gawlo organised communication campaigns on themes related to the demographic dividend and women’s empowerment. Firstly in Dakar, Senegal - during the celebrations of the 2018 International Day of Women, a 3-day festival which included a dialogue forum, apress conference, a gala dinner and concerts, with six artists: Babani Koné (Mali), Noura (Burkina Faso), Mouna Mint Dendeni (Mauritania), Mounira Michella (Chad), Rocky Gold (Côte d’Ivoire), and Faty Mariko (Niger). The aim was to mobilise the civil society, the young people, students, and women’s national authorities, journalists, and the population at large, to debate issues around reproductive health and women’s economic empowerment. Another 3-day event took place, in Nouakchott, Mauritania with the participation of famous Mauritanian artists notably Mouna Mint Dendeni, Seydou Nourou Gueye and the young Khoudia.

The campaigns were organised with the technical and financial support of the Senegalese and Mauritanian Governments, UNFPA Country Offices, the SWEDD project, and other United Nations agencies (the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the private sector.
UNFPA Unveils Demographic Dividend Observatories

High population growth rates, maintained by some of the highest fertility rates in the world, will be the most pressing challenge in the near future. Two vital questions call for answers for the future:

**Will economic development automatically lead to lower fertility?**

**Will lower fertility automatically lead to higher economic growth?**

> These are among the fundamental questions that inform UNFPA’s future scenario and inspired its push for the establishment of National Demographic Dividend Observatories (NDDO).

With the support of the Regional Centre of Excellence in Generational Economics (CREG) and the Thiès Applied Finance and Economics Research Centre (Centre de Recherche en Economie et Finance Appliquées de Thiès - CREFAT) as a strategic implementing partner, this objective is aligned with the AU Roadmap agreed in 2017 by the continent’s Heads of States and governments. So far Benin, Senegal, Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad have established fully functional National Demographic Dividend Observatories.
The role of Demographic Dividend Observatories

An observatory serves to monitor information. It is a tool that enables continuous monitoring of a subject, social trend, sector of economic activity, territory and even technology among others to inform and guide the choices of the relevant decision-makers such as governments, parliamentarians, elected officials, development partners and civil society. These five missions represent the units that will comprise each NDDO, signaling the central role of the population variable in sectoral policies.

Within the framework of the Demographic Dividend, the current observatories launched are leading in taking to account national and international guidelines and normative recommendations on the production and dissemination of socio-economic and demographic data. They are reinforcing the production of internationally defined indicators, particularly those related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 and the Agenda 2063.

The indicators will be demand-driven and developed through exchanges with national and international users in order to respond to the information needs of the countries' various development programmes and policies at the national and international levels.

The objectives are to train actors and stakeholders at all levels to develop monitoring and evaluation tools that integrate demographic and economic variables. The exchange and sharing of experiences will be a means of making documentation available and sharing best practices, the Demographic Dividend programming tool will be developed by training all actors and then establishing a pool of resource persons at the state level in the fields of expertise and subjects of the Demographic Dividend.
In each of the countries covered by the UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCA-RO), the demographic dividend observatories are responsible for:

- **data collection and storage;**
- **data analysis and modeling;**
- **data exchange through a (cross-cutting) information system;**
- **communication and advocacy;** and
- **supporting decision-making on the Demographic Dividend.**

These five missions represent the units that will comprise each NDDO, signaling the central role of the population variable in sectoral policies.
The Spotlight Initiative

Three UN agencies core to the initiative are: UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women with UNICEF also part of the Initiative. A total of 250 million Euros will be invested in Africa. The focus areas for the Africa programme are SGBV, Harmful Practices (FGM and child marriage), and SRHR.

The Initiative in Africa will be operationalized at two levels: country and regional. Eight countries will receive Spotlight funds for Joint programmes. In West and Central Africa, these countries are Liberia, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. In East and Southern Africa, the countries are: Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In view of implementing the Spotlight Initiative, UNFPA WCARO prepared a readiness paper with an assessment and analysis to support regional integrated programmes in general and the Spotlight Initiative more specifically. The paper provides an analysis of our commitment and preparedness to support the optimal successful implementation of the Spotlight Initiative - a combined initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

UNFPA WCARO takes the Spotlight Initiative very seriously and considers it a topmost priority for the region.

Download UNFPA WCARO Readiness Paper

UNFPA-WCARO Prepares for ICPD25 and UNFPA@50 in 2019

The West and Central Africa regional planning gathering wrapped up with pledges to leverage resource mobilization, boost strategic partnerships and achieve the three Zeros.

The main pillar of the recommendations called for the speeding up preparations for 2019 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD+25) as well as the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA@50).

The 2019 regional planning meeting of UNFPA in West and Central Africa took place in early December and made key recommendations and pledges that would better position and thrust the organization in the new year.

The retreat impressed upon the regional and country offices to build on the momentum of the Accra consensus at the successful Africa ICPD review, to accelerate the achievement of these three transformative results, including the scaling up of regional joint initiatives on Demographic Dividend agenda.

Participants were unanimous on the need to build on UNFPA's successful advocacy and communication initiatives in the region to raise visibility, grow the brand and widely disseminate UNFPA results of various interventions. In this light, the regional and country offices were highly encouraged to improve knowledge creation, management, documentation and sharing particularly of good practices in countries of the region.

Enhancing resource mobilization including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation to implement activities, projects and programmes geared toward achieving UNFPA's three transformative results.

Other recommendations focused on staff capacity, management and career development.
Our combined family planning initiatives in 2017 across the region could have contributed to the signature indictors’ results presented.

→ CYP 8,907,762
→ Total users of modern family planning methods including condoms 6,300,809
→ Received SRH services 12,844,536
→ Health care providers trained 6,529
Benin’s demographic dividend: a consolidation of achievements

→ Following several domestic efforts to raise the public’s awareness of the demographic dividend and the importance of harnessing it, Benin became the latest member of the SWEDD project, joining Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad.

Against this backdrop, in September the Ministry of Planning and Development held a training workshop in on establishing the Benin National Observatory in the city of Bohicon which is 98 Km from the capital Cotonou.

Establishing the demographic dividend observatory

Benin’s highest authorities have committed to channel the demographic dividend to drive development. This has been reflected in the application the country submitted to the World Bank in March 2017 to join the Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project.

→ Earlier in June Benin had successfully organised a national workshop on the demographic dividend, bringing together the government, technical and financial partners (TFPs) and the private sector.

In 2018, the process of taking ownership and making the demographic dividend functional was kick-started with an awareness-raising campaign among local elected officials and activities to set up the demographic dividend observatory as well as negotiations with the World Bank and workshops to develop pathways to join the SWEDD project.

→ Total users of modern family planning methods including condoms 37.557
→ Received SRH services 39.563
Burkina Faso pressed on with its national commitments to implement the *African Union’s Road Map for Harnessing the Demographic Dividend* and to continue to ensure the successful implementation of the SWEDD initiative.

To accelerate the demographic transition in the country, it:

- Recruited 83,548 additional users of modern contraceptive methods through innovative strategies, representing 30% of national performance;

- Established 583 functional savings groups made up of 12,635 women which are managed by two microfinance institutions (MFIs), namely the Faitière des caisses Populaires du Burkina (FCPB) and the Société de Financement de la Petite Entreprises.

- Integrated family planning into the activities of 295 women’s producer groups to further empower them, in five cities in Burkina Faso which are served by 20 specially recruited midwives known as ‘MaCopine’ who provide family planning and reproductive health services to group members on site, on an ongoing basis.

- Protected 3,066 girls from marriage by placing them in “safe spaces” where they can develop their skills.
UNFPA & UNICEF support fight against violence in the school environment

In Cape Verde 44.2% of students and 21.9% of teachers respectively have already been victims of violence within the school environment.

A study on violence in schools, prepared by the Center for Research and Training in Gender and Family, and the University of Cape Verde (Uni-CV) Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts, funded by UNICEF and UNFPA points out.

Of the 2804 students and 566 teachers surveyed at the national level, the majority of respondents point to students as the main offenders. The document that examined 53 public and semi-public schools across the country that included teachers, students, country focus groups and parents and the management brought to the fore some data that needed special attention.

“This study revealed that there should be some concern about the perception that teachers and students have about the concept of violence, because there are percent that we consider important that do not consider some practices like kicking, punching and sexual harassment as acts of violence. “ One of the researchers, Fernandina Fernandes said.

After the opening ceremony of the workshop on socialization of the results of the “Study on Violence in the School Environment in Cape Verde”, attended by the representative of UNICEF and UNFPA, Ana Cristina Ferreira, the Rector of the University of Cape Verde, Judite Nascimento and the Director General of Planning, Budget and Management and the Ministry of Education José Marques, the researcher Cláudio Furtado said that: “In this investigation it has been proven that the spaces where violence is most frequent are corridors, sporting boards and patios.”

In this same document, five types of violence namely physical, psychological, patrimonial, sexual and cybernetic were identified. 75.1% of the students and 89.9% of the teachers considered these acts as forms of violence.
Operation Fistula to eliminate fistula in Cameroon

Expert Surgeon and Trainer on Obstetric Fistula issues Dr. Geert Morren of the US-based NGO Operation Fistula spent two weeks in Cameroon undertaking fistula repairs.

UNFPA partnered with the Operation Fistula in support of the Cameroonian government’s fight for the elimination of Obstetric Fistula.

Dr Morren led in the obstetric fistula repair campaign in the Adamawa Region in July 2018 at the Protestant Hospital of Ngaoundéré.

“We introduced the use of digital tablets for patient data collection that will allow easier and faster data analysis.”

Dr. Morren said as he introduced the GOFER (Global Obstetric Fistula Electronic Registry) Project which is designed to document and improve every interaction between a patient and her care team across the continuum.

While in Cameroon Dr. Morren deployed his expertise as a surgeon and trainer. He helped conduct repair surgeries on 23 women with fistula complications and trained two Cameroonian surgeons while mentoring eight nurses.

Through this partnership, UNFPA has been able to strengthen its support to the Cameroonian government in the fight for the elimination of obstetric fistula in Cameroon.
UNFPA spruces up maternal health in Central African Republic

With a maternal mortality rate of 890 deaths per 100,000 births in 2010, the Central African Republic is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest rate. This is mainly due in part to a shortage of trained medical staff in the provision of emergency obstetric and neonatal care and the lack of equipment needed to care for women and newborns.

To counter this situation, UNFPA-WCARO supports the Ministry of Health and Population through the Mentoring project for the technical capacity building of providers in the field of obstetric and neonatal care together with related emergencies. With this Mentorship project, it is expected to train a total of 90 midwives, 15 doctors and 12 anesthetic technicians over a period of two years.

Following a rapid assessment of the needs identified three hospitals Community Hospital, Domitian Mothers Hospital and Friendship Hospital were identified to serve as centres of excellence in meeting the proposed training needs. UNFPA has equipped these institutions with reproductive health kits video projector, flipchart, surgical lights, chairs, training platforms and manikin sets to boost these courses.

In June 2018, the first cohort of 15 midwives was enrolled for a one-month certified capacity building training on basic obstetric and neonatal care.
Islanders on Lake Chad Basin look up to UNFPA

UNFPA remains the only UN agency to have meaningful interventions on the Lake Chad Basin supporting vulnerable women and girls.

This year has seen UNFPA steadfastly holding on to the sustainable development call of “leave no one behind”. UNFPA interventions have led to the transformation of the hardest-to-reach town of Bol some 327.8km from the Chadian capital N’Djamena.

→ Teaming up with its partners AFJT and IDHL who are working within the 20-30 kilometres radius of the lake’s main basin town of Bol UNFPA-WCARO has strong permanent presence in the Lake Chad’s islands of Selia, Ngomirom-Doumou and Ngaliama.

The total population is around 40,000 most of whom were displaced due to Boko Haram’s insurgency have been forced to live under harsh conditions. UNFPA and its partners moved in to alleviate the suffering and humanitarian crisis.

Despite the difficult conditions successful sexual reproductive and maternal health results continue to be recorded in the three islands:

→ 331 skilled birth attendance;
→ 34 obstetric emergency referred to Bol hospital by boat with (no maternal death);
→ 673 women had access to antenatal care;
→ 178 additional users of modern contraceptive method;
→ 10 662 young girls and boys were sensitized on SRH, STI and HIV/AIDS, and GBV;
→ 41035 reach on SRHR and GBV;
→ 33 survivors of sexual violence received psychosocial and medical care;
→ 204 survivors of physical and psychological violence survivors received psycho-social care, along with 68 others who received medical care and 106 were granted legal support;
→ 120 focal points trained for the identification and guidance of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence;
→ 1290 dignity kits distributed to women and girls from local populations.
UNFPA-Congo positions demographic dividend as a major national economic priority

After launching the continental and the national road-maps in 2017, UNFPA-Congo pursued these initiatives supporting the 2018 finalization of the national report on demographic dividend profile. An elaborate public awareness campaign has already been rolled out with the sole objective of mobilizing all stakeholders and communities on the inherent benefits of capitalizing on the regional demographic dividend.

The UNFPA country office has worked closely with the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education in setting up a well-designed plan in readiness to operationalise the demographic dividend as a key development imperative.

UNFPA-Congo has also taken this opportunity to position the demographic dividend as one of the major national priorities to be addressed as an economic pillar of the new National Development Plan (PND, 2018-2022), as it is being done in the new UNDAF (2020-2024) which is nearing completion.
Changing behaviours and social norms in favour of family planning: commitment of religious leaders

Given the strong influence that religious and community leaders have on changing community attitudes, perceptions and behaviour, their capacities need to be strengthened so that they can be used as key drivers of change and as influencers and champions for reproductive health (RH).

The UNFPA Côte d’Ivoire office and the Ministries of Health and Culture provided support in the form of capacity-building for the implementing partners comprising of the Alliance of Religious Leaders against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics in Côte d’Ivoire (ARSIP), traditional leaders, the network of traditional communicators, the Community Radio Association and the National Institute for Performing Arts and Cultural Action (INSAAC).

An awareness-raising campaign was carried out with 103 students from INSAAC in a bid to have them integrate awareness-raising messages and themes on gender promotion, reproductive rights and harnessing the demographic dividend into their artistic, theatrical, musical and cinematographic production. The advocacy documentary film “Why did Mrs. X die?” was screened and was the subject of discussion and much interest among creative students involved in family planning.

21 language communicators and community radio hosts are now involved in family planning broadcast messages on 14 community radio stations including Côte d’Ivoire’s national radio to raise public awareness of the benefits of family planning on family development and child education.

15 traditional chiefs and customary leaders were educated on the subject and guided to deliver clear, simple messages to their community members about the benefits of planning for women’s health, the economy and family well-being. Similarly, 25 ARSIP members, including 19 religious leaders, were trained to advocate for the demographic dividend and the integration of messages on reproductive health, demographic dividend, family planning and adolescent and youth reproductive health into awareness-raising activities.

As a result of these training sessions, religious and community leaders have committed to disseminating awareness-raising messages on family planning. As such, messages on family planning preached by these leaders in places of worship have reached 6,430 people.
Noble Energy Project makes progress in Equatorial Guinea

The Noble Energy Project received a boost when its plans to supply medicines and family planning essentials were approved by Equatorial Guinea’s health and social welfare minister Dr. Salomón Nguema Owono. Also accepted was provision of a mobile clinic to serve Noble Energy’s project on maternal and neonatal mortality reduction in Bioko Norte and Kie Ntem localities.

The minister approved this when he met Noble Energy Steering Committee members to discuss strategic guidelines for the year. Equatorial Guinea’s senior health officials as well as the Noble Energy social projects coordinator, and the UNFPA technical team also participated in the meeting.

Under the leadership of the Minister Dr. Owono, the Steering Committee of the Project met in late January 2018, to set up the main strategic guidelines for 2018 guided by the theme “Maternal and Neonatal Mortality Reduction in Bioko Norte and Kie Ntem.”

UNFPA Resident Representative, Mr. Mady Biaye, and the Noble Energy Social Responsibility Manager, Mr. Ken McGhee and senior health officials together with UNFPA-WCARO technical team participated in the meeting held in the Guinean capital, Malabo.

The Project Coordinator, Mrs. Maria Teixeira, presented the main 2017 achievements, and some technical recommendations for the Steering Committee to deliberate upon.

After the presentation, Dr. Owono congratulated UNFPA, and asked Noble Energy to replicate similar projects across the country.

The Committee also decided that the essential medicines and Family Planning commodities, which will be brought to the country in the framework of the Project, should be free of charge to the end-users. It also approved the decision to secure a mobile clinic and to adopt a targeted strategy for Kie Ntem, in order to tackle the specific problems of the population.
Boosting midwifery in Gabon

UNFPA is collaborating with Gabon’s University of Health Sciences, in the reevaluation and repositioning of the national curriculum and reference framework for training midwives in the country.

Though it is a crucial link in reproductive health midwifery largely remains unappreciated. Seeking to redefine this UNFPA has prioritised the training of midwives and status upgrade as a policy intervention. This midwifery training curricula is now being structured to allow those joining the profession to not only acquire medical knowledge, but also increase analytical and synthesis qualities which will empower them to participate effectively in the health policy of Gabon. The University of Health Sciences being in the midst of a transformation of the higher education system, characterized by the gradual harmonization of training offers, diplomas and courses of study, reshape the training of midwives by realigning the curricula to allow for the progression from Bachelor’s degree all the way to the Doctorate system.

Since a repository is a basis for launching a new professional dynamic, the Association of Midwives of Gabon (ASFG) seized the opportunity to review the document on “the national reference system for the training of midwives in the Gabonese Republic”. This review of the midwifery profession is expected to enhance service delivery and attract younger persons into the profession to boost reproductive health.
UNFPA The Gambia in 2018 supported the Ministry of Youth and Sports through the National Youth Council, to develop the Gambia Programme of Action on Youth. This instrumental document is aligned to both national & regional developmental frameworks such as the National Development Plan (2018-2021), the African Union Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The programme of action will guide efforts to empower and uplift Gambian young people, through the design and implementation of impact-oriented interventions.

The Gambia participated in the Demographic Dividend Profiling Training held in Ghana in April 2018 and the team of experts developed the DD profile of the country and drafted a report. This profile would be disseminated and the results used to inform policy.
2018 UNFPA-The Gambia Achievement Profile

→ 260 Health Care Providers trained on Emergency Maternal and Newborn Care including Family Planning and other related issues

→ 7 Health Facilities have been provided with basic medical equipment and their personnel trained to facilitate provision of Basic emergency obstetric care services

→ Quarterly Maternal Death Audit review meetings conducted in 3 major health centers and 6 hospitals

→ 75 Community-Based Distributors trained on Family Planning, Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS.

→ 60 Youth Peer Health Educators trained on SRH and Family Planning

→ 30 Midwives trained on Post-Abortion Care Management

→ 24,613 unintended pregnancies were avoided

→ 8,849 unsafe abortions were averted

→ 70 maternal deaths averted

→ 62,474 new Family Planning users recorded

→ 282,679 modern Family Planning users recorded

→ 219,734 received sexual and reproductive health services

→ 2,503 people were provided with Gender Based Violence services
Leveraging the potential of Religious Leaders to end unmet need for Family Planning in Ghana

Religion plays a critical role in the development of the Ghanaian society.

Ghana’s population is said to be 70% Christian and 30% Muslim. The clergy have a say in the leadership affairs of the nation. It is for this reason that UNFPA-Ghana leverages on the support of religious leaders towards empowering adolescent girls on issues of Sexual and Gender-based violence and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in particular. Capacity building on issues such as family planning, demographic dividend and maternal health are the other areas that UNFPA-Ghana has solidified cooperation ties with Faith-Based organisations.

Sheikh Amin Bamba is just one of the many clerics supporting family planning and talks openly about it in his mosque where he offers sermons and teaches.

“The Quran supports family planning.” Sheikh Bamba says. “It is how you interpret the meaning but Allah always wanted the best for his children and will not condone any circumstance that will jeopardize their lives.”

Under the all-encompassing theme “Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Demographic Transition” Sheikh Bamba reaffirmed his faith at the November 2018 National Faith Based Organizations’ conference held in Accra.

“I will keep teaching this to the young people and upcoming generation of Muslims.” Sheikh Bamba “I will do that now and always for the over 1,070 students at the Bamba Islamic institute in Tamale and Wa campuses, because that is the only way out of poverty for them by 2030.”

UNFPA-Ghana partners with the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs to create an enabling environment for addressing unmet need for family planning and promoting gender equality as well as Sexual Reproductive Health service delivery at the national and decentralized levels.
**Conakry hosts “Culture, Communication and Demographic Dividend” summit**

**In May 2018, the city of Conakry in the Republic of Guinea hosted one of the key cornerstone conferences of UNFPA-WCARO under the theme “Culture, Communication and Demographic Dividend”**.

His Excellency Prof. Alpha Conde, President of the Republic of Guinea, opened the conference whose participation was graced by high-level delegations of traditional leaders from Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The conference brought together a congregation of over 100 traditional leaders from eight countries in the region as well as representatives of ministries of culture to discuss their contribution in strapping up and utilizing the demographic dividend.

President Conde took the opportunity to call on countries of the region to pay particular attention to issues of demography, reject child marriages, improve girls’ education and encourage family planning.

UNFPA Regional Director, Mabingue Ngom, commended the traditional leaders of their role in solidifying society. According to Ngom the partnership with traditional communicators is highly strategic and makes it possible for cultural leaders to become ambassadors of social and behavior change. “Cultural and traditional leaders are an important bridge contributing to harnessing the demographic dividend.” Ngom said.

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**Guinea**

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**CYP** 549.500

**2018 Additional users above baseline** 71.601

**Total users of modern family planning methods including condoms** 244.812
Guinea Bissau’s hard-to-reach maternities get a facelift

Until July 2018, when a woman faced a Caesarian section emergency on the island of Bubaque, in Guinea-Bissau, she had to take a five-hour boat ride to the capital city. And the available catamaran sailed once a week.

Bubaque’s regional hospital, which serves 17 islands in the Bijagos archipelago did not have any surgical ward and lacked the ability to provide emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

Women in need of urgent care often resorted to taking the unreliable and slower motorized canoes, to make the long journey along of the Atlantic Ocean.

“The women of the Bijagos risked their lives traveling from Bubaque in search of treatment.” Kourtoum Nacro, UNFPA’s Representative then in Guinea-Bissau says. Since 2015, averages of 14 pregnant women with obstetric complications were evacuated from the area to Bissau each year. Some did not survive.

According to UNFPA, Guinea-Bissau has one of the 20 highest maternal death rates in the world. Most of these fatalities are preventable with access to equipped health services and midwives. Apparently an estimated 79% of the country’s need for skilled midwifery care is unmet and fewer than half of the country’s women give birth under the care of a skilled attendant.

It is this scenario that UNFPA and the Guinean government together with partners have sought to change.

A new surgical ward, supported by UNFPA and the government of Portugal, opened at the regional hospital in late July 2018 targeting to serve Bubaque, and the entire area of Bolama-Bijagos, with a population of over 35,000.

“The ward is expected to reduce referrals of pregnant women to Bissau, bring down maternal deaths and, significantly ease the suffering of people living in the islands,” said midwife Arminda Correia, who is in charge of reproductive health issues in the region.

With the new surgery facilities, the hospital will be able to provide a full primary health services, antenatal care, assisted deliveries, emergency obstetric, neonatal, post-natal care, obstetric surgery and other general surgeries.

The Bubaque ward is the sixth health facility constructed by UNFPA since 2015. Today, all six of the health facilities are up, and five are fully operational. UNFPA is complementing these efforts by helping to train Anesthetics Technicians who were previously unavailable in Guinea-Bissau together with skilled midwives.
Liberia holds first ever National Family Planning Conference

2018 marked a watershed year for UNFPA-Liberia. Liberia’s first ever family planning conference was held in the capital Monrovia, in late September this year under the banner of “National Investment for Quality Access to Family Planning for Health and Economic Development.”

This conference jointly organised by Liberia’s Ministry of Health, UNFPA-Liberia and other partners brought together over 100 members of the civil society, embassies, bilateral and multi-lateral partners, counties leaderships, district and community leaders, members of line ministries and agencies, national legislature, business community, the media, university students as well as beneficiaries and service providers.

The Conference shared national and international data demonstrating the importance of investing in Family Planning as a tool for national development. Liberia’s Vice President Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor opened the conference and in her keynote address underscored the need for promoting family values through the maintenance of a family size that can be supported as the foundation of any nation. Discussions on family planning and national development, integration of family planning into healthcare services at community and facility levels together with the role of traditional and religious communities in enhancing family planning formed a core part of the two-day national conference.
Mali hosts first regional champions’ thematic meeting

UNFPA-Mali Country office hosted the first Champion meeting to provide a forum to discuss the proposals put forward by each champion and to agree on activities to be implemented during the year.

The Champions’ meeting steered on the recommendations from the 2018 RMT meeting and the Director’s vision for the region as the implementation of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan and Regional Programme started.

The Mali meeting specifically focused on agreeing on concrete actions to take advantage of gains and to take the region from good to excellent. The main objective was to: Agree on the concrete actions to operationalize the champions’ platform through open, interactive and constructive discussions with leadership reflections and specific presentations on Management and Public Policy, Change Management, Partnerships, Resource Mobilization, Procurement, Maternal health, Religious, Traditional leaders, youth, demographic dividend, advocacy and communication.

By hosting the Champions meeting, Mali was carrying forward what started in June 2015 when the regional management team (RMT) met in Libreville in Gabon and agreed on a 7-point agenda to take the UNFPA West and Central Africa Region from good to best.

| → CYP                                                                 | 735,552 |
| → Total users of modern family planning methods including condoms   | 271,187 |
| → Fistula repairs                                                    | 178     |
More than 200 managers and actors in the health sector show their support for midwifery

*International Midwifery Day was celebrated in May 2018 in the Mauritania capital, Nouakchott in the presence of the Minister of Health.*

The commemorative activities of the day were attended by more than 200 health leaders including central and regional directors of health services, the national Reproductive Health programme coordinator, director of the National School of Public Health and representatives of professional gynecologists and nursing associations (ASMAGO and ANIDEM).

This day served as a high-level advocacy function which achieved:

- A strong commitment from the Minister of Health to improve the quality of midwifery training, particularly the Master’s degree in obstetric care and nursing, as an introduction to the LMD (Bachelor, Master’s, Doctorate) system.

- An analysis of the status of midwifery that identified the problems hindering the promotion of the vocation and provided relevant recommendations and an implementation plan.

In addition, 622 women of childbearing age were able to benefit from free Reproductive Health consultations during open days organized by Mauritania’s Midwives Association.

Mauritania

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<td>Total users of modern family planning methods including condoms</td>
<td>74,741</td>
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<tr>
<td>Received SRH services</td>
<td>2,505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Roll of Honor from the “Safe Space Program at Illimin”

Leyla Gouzayé, 23 years old female electrician in Niamey chose to train as an electrician “because it’s a man’s job”. The only girl in her entire year group of trainee electricians at Kalmharo Vocational School, Leyla is committed with every inch of her being to tackling child marriage and gender inequality, having been through a forced marriage herself nine years ago, which turned her life upside down.

Leyla fled beatings and went hungry in the streets before taking refuge with a neighbour to give birth. A court eventually granted her a divorce and she returned to Niamey the capital of Niger, where she lived with her maternal uncle.

“My mother told me: ‘Maybe you’ll find your destiny there’. She’s the one who enrolled me at the Talladje Safe Space. Illimin saved me. Thanks to Illimin, I went back to school and I will make something of myself,” says the young woman.

After attending the Safe Space Program at Illimin, Leyla pieced her life back together again. She returned to fourth grade, moved to third grade, and was accepted for the secondary school Brevet d’Etude du Premier Cycle (BEPC) exams. Then she enrolled at Kalmharo to learn a trade that can earn her a living and enable her to provide for her children, no matter what happens.

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UNFPA-Nigeria unpacks Demographic Dividend for Sustainable Development

One of the major outcomes of the advocacy efforts led by UNFPA was a statement made by the President of Nigeria at the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), emphasizing the commitment of Nigeria to harness the potential of the increasing youth bulge in the country together with the trickle-down from federal government to the local states.

The two States of Kaduna and Lagos which are at various stages of mainstreaming demographic dividend in policies and programme implementation stand out as best examples.

In 2018, UNFPA-Nigeria continued to record progress in its demographic dividend programming, aimed at accelerating the process of harnessing the demographic dividend in the country. It provided support for the finalisation and publication of Nigeria Demographic Dividend Report to consolidate on its efforts of demographic dividend profiling at the national and sub-national levels. As part of this, the country office provided support for state-level road map on demographic dividend starting from Lagos state. Additionally, the country office scaled up its engagements with different stakeholders through a first-ever private sector conference on demographic dividend in May 2018 and segmentation of consultations with religious leaders, starting with Muslim Religious Leaders in September 2018.
Commitment to demographic dividend

According to the national report on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD), São Tomé and Príncipe has implemented 71 of its 88 commitments, with a special focus on the pillar relating to dignity, equality and health.

In addition, government statisticians and planners have been trained on using the demographic dividend profile and the African Union (AU) road map to prepare development plans and programmes. Leaders of youth organizations have also been educated on enhancing the value of the demographic dividend.

Deputies involved in population and development issues

The parliament of São Tomé and Príncipe unanimously established the Parliamentary Network on Population and Development (RPPD-STP) by means of a resolution, as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) prepares to mark its 25th anniversary.

The purpose of this network is to evaluate and monitor the actions carried out by entities concerned with population and development issues alongside the demographic dividend nexus.

As stated in the founding document, “the overall objective of the RPPD-STP is to raise citizens’ awareness of matters relating to population and human development by promoting, supporting and stimulating policies, in particular in the areas of gender equality, education, health, security and social inequalities, while always respecting the fundamental rights of the individual and the family, as set out in international laws and conventions.”

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“New deal”, community pact to end teen pregnancy and early marriage

Penda Diallo is 15 when she becomes pregnant. Unfortunately for her, her boyfriend refuses the paternity of the child. In her distress, she benefited from the support from the Girls Club, supervised by the Kolda Adolescent Counseling Center, supported by UNFPA. Her story is told by Assy, 18, President of the West Sikilo Girls’ Club in the Kolda region of southern Senegal. This girl leader has joined the “New Deal”, a community pact against pregnancy and early marriage. Through this pact, parents pledge not to marry their daughters before the age of 18 and girls in return not to become pregnant before marriage.

The girls' clubs, initiated by the community pact, aim to promote girls' leadership in the fight against child marriage and early pregnancy. Since the launch of the initiative in 2017, 82 girls' clubs recognized by their communities have been set up and no girl members of these clubs have become pregnant.

Improving women and adolescents’ health and well-being in Senegal

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of Canada has funded through UNFPA Senegal Country Office a groundbreaking project entitled “improving the health and well-being of women and adolescent girls in southern Senegal” in the amount of 19.9 million Canadian dollars. The project’s objective is to improve the sexual and reproductive health of over 635,000 women and girls in the five regions of southern Senegal.

The project addresses three main challenges, namely the low use of quality sexual and reproductive health services; gender inequalities and gender-based violence, the persistence of child marriages and Female genital mutilation and the low availability of quality data on sexual and reproductive health.

This five-year (2018-2022) initiative aims to improve the health and well-being of girls and women in southern Senegal regions, namely Ziguinchor, Kolda, Sedhiou, Tambacounda and Kedougou, through a better use of quality maternal health services including family planning, adolescent / youth reproductive health, and prevention and care of gender-based violence. The project is implemented with a multi-sectoral approach allowing close collaboration between the ministries responsible for women, youth, education, justice, the economy and NGOs.
Child Marriage: The story of Zainab Binta Jalloh

“According to our tradition, a girl should get married when she reaches puberty,” 23-year-old Zainab Binta Jalloh, a from Sierra Leone’s Koinadugu District located approximately 166 kilometers from the capital Freetown, says. She should know after all she was married when she was 15 years old.

When Zainab was only 13, a 45-year-old man approached her parents with a marriage proposal.

“He was rich, and he was using his wealth to influence my parents.” Zainab says. “My parents were pressuring me about him every day.” But she was opposed to marrying so young. “I always resisted them.” Zainab recalls.

At her tender age Zainab knew she needed help to avoid an impending child marriage.

“I explained my situation to a friend, and she advised me to join the Children’s Forum Network.” Zainab says. “Through the network, I was fortunate to be part of the National Girls’ Camp.”

The National Girls’ Camp is a week-long girls’ empowerment camp, organized by the Office of the First Lady and UNFPA. It teaches girls about their health and human rights. It also teaches them financial literacy, computer skills, comprehensive sexuality education, advocacy and activism.

The girls, selected from a wide range of backgrounds, also received support from a mentor. “I learned from women who would become my role models through their inspirational stories.” Zainab says.
Empowering girls

UNFPA is working with the Government of Sierra Leone and other partners to end child marriage and promote girls’ welfare in Sierra Leone. Through the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, girls’ clubs are being established throughout the country.

In these clubs, girls learn their rights and health – including the health risks of early pregnancy and their right to live free of abuse and child marriage. They also receive support and guidance from trusted role models.

Today, Zainab is a role model, as well. She is outspoken about her experience, sharing her story with girls, activists and others to help spark change.

She is also a student at the university, and she has big dreams.

“I am currently enjoying life as a student,” she says. “Someday I hope to save enough money to study to be a medical doctor.”
Reproductive Health Campaign Targets

→ reproductive health campaign targets schools

In the context of preventing teenage pregnancies among adolescents and young people in general the Technical Secretariat of the Platform for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to combat Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)/HIV and AIDS in Togo, with the support of UNFPA-Togo, worked with NGOs to organize awareness-raising campaigns and offer integrated services for family planning, STI treatment and HIV testing.

Four campaigns were conducted during the year, reaching 349 sites, including 243 secondary schools and 106 learning centres or meeting places across the country in the six health regions. The campaigns entailed awareness-raising sessions and film screenings, especially that of the ‘C'est la Vie’ series.

Through these campaigns, UNFPA has helped reduce teenage and unintended pregnancies and STIs through behaviour change among secondary school students and those in extracurricular settings in all six regions of Togo. In particular, the campaigns set out to:

→ Improve secondary school students’ knowledge of the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy and how to prevent it;
→ Educate secondary school students about the menstrual cycle;
→ Demonstrate the correct use of male and female condoms;
→ Provide free RH services, including proper screening and treatment of STIs using syndrome management, HIV testing and modern and natural contraceptive methods, to young people aged 15–24.

The campaigns took place in March, May, June and August and were carried out by 27 CSOs in the country’s six health regions, under the joint supervision of the regional platforms and the regional health and education directorates.
As part of the development of a quality country programme documents, WCARO through its Programme Coordination and Quality Assurance unit established the conditions that allow each UNFPA staff and the national counterparts to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change.

Previously the Regional Office brought together in Senegal the roll-out countries with a limited participation of two or three people per country to develop and improve their knowledge in the development of quality country programme document. In 2018, saw a different approach being deployed. The aim was to target the maximum number of UNFPA staff as well as the national counterparts to have a better impact in capacity development.

This saw the Regional Office team going to two countries (Congo and Sierra Leone) which are in the 2020-2024 programming process to:

- **Build the capacity of UNFPA country teams; and their national counterparts in programming;**
- **Strengthen the capacity of country offices to use tools and templates for country programme documents and annexes and to guide them in the submission and quality assurance processes;**
- **Develop and improve their knowledge and skills in the theory of change and results-based management.**

The skills and resource enhancement programme involved about 40 participants in Sierra Leone and about 30 in the Congo including the different sectoral ministries that work with UNFPA, NGOs; implementing partners and UNFPA staff.
2018 saw UNFPA-WCARO re-energizing interventions in its humanitarian pillar on four areas. These areas included:

- **Advocacy and partnerships in humanitarian areas**
- **Capacity building/development of Country Offices**
- **Technical assistance and quality assurance of the Country Office minimum preparedness actions and Resource mobilization efforts and implementation of humanitarian funds**

### Advocacy and partnerships in humanitarian area

UNFPA-WCARO attended all the monthly Humanitarian Steering Committee meetings held and positioned the bottlenecks faced by WCA country offices of Burkina Faso, Cameroun, CAR, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo in humanitarian settings.

In late January 2018 UNFPA-WCARO organized a Regional consultation of Gender Based Violence (GBV) coordinators of humanitarian countries in the region. The consultative meeting was held in Dakar, Senegal and was aimed at contributing to the GBV strategy for WCA region and its alignment to the overall global strategy. The meeting attracted 30 participants from six WCARO countries who were joined by colleagues from the regional offices representing PAM, CPlE/UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women, OCHA, IOM, European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection - ECHO, REGA, UNFPA and WCARO.
A draft strategy of GBV in WCA region emerged as an output of this consultation and is currently available and under review awaiting final approval.

**Capacity building and development of Country Offices**

WCARO organized four major capacity development workshops:

**Workshop on COD-Population Statistics** in Dakar → 30 participants from 13 WCARO countries.

**GBVIMS workshop** – Francophone countries in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire → 25 participants from three regions of WCARO, ESARO and LACRO.

**Capacity Development Workshop** – Francophone nations in Dakar → 31 participants from 15 countries.

**Surge Workshop/Capacity Building Workshop** for Francophone countries → 29 participants from 17 nations.

**Technical assistance and quality assurance of the CO minimum preparedness actions**

WCARO received and ensured the quality of the Country Office minimum preparedness actions plans for 2018 for the 20 Country Offices.

**Resource mobilization efforts and implementation of humanitarian funds**

$2,161,375 was disbursed to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, CAR, Nigeria, Niger, and Liberia.