UNITING AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Commemorating the International Day of Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and launch of UN Joint Programme on FGM Phase IV

KAMPALA: On 8 February, UNFPA joined partners to commemorate the Zero Tolerance of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Day marked under the theme: Partnering with Men and boys to transform social and gender norms to end FGM.

The event that took place at Sheraton Hotel in Kampala was organized by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in partnership with UNFPA and UNICEF in Uganda. The day also marked the launch of the Phase IV of the Global Programme on Elimination of FGM: Uganda Chapter. Phase III concluded in 2021. Zero tolerance is an awareness day marked every 6th of February.

In Uganda, Bwoko, Kqueen and Kapchorwa in Elgon region and, Amudat, Moroto and Nakapiripirit districts in Karamoja are the leading FGM -practicing districts.

Speaking on behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, The UN Resident coordinator Susan Ngogi Namondo said Female genital mutilation inflicts lasting emotional and physical harm on the most vulnerable members of society since it has no medical or religious justification, and it has no place in the 21st century.
“Ending female genital mutilation requires more collaboration among a broad group of stakeholders, including global, regional, national and local policymakers; civil society from small grass-roots organizations and women’s rights groups to international non-governmental organizations; agents of change from parents, teachers and health workers to religious leaders and local elders; as well as law enforcement and judicial officials, men and boys also have a crucial role to play,” she said.

The Resident coordinator also called upon the Government of Uganda and all stakeholders to UNITE around proven strategies, FUND them adequately and ACT NOW.

In her remarks, UNFPA Representative Dr Mary Otieno said FGM is not only a harmful cultural practice but also an infringement of human rights that violates the principles of equality and respect for human dignity as well as impeding the enjoyment of rights of women and girls including sexual and reproductive health rights and exposes women to serious health, psychological, physical, and social consequences.

However, she noted that with the rapid population growth, FGM is expected to further increase the number of girls at risk, adding urgency to the global and national efforts to eliminate the practice by 2030 as set out in the Sustainable Development Goal.

“With only eight years remaining in this decade of action, there is potential in eliminating this harmful practice through sustainable partnerships with men and boys. Their voices and actions can transform the deeply rooted social and gender norms, underpinning the practice, allowing girls and women to realize their rights and potential in terms of health, education, income, and equality,” Otieno said.

The Representative mentioned how it was exciting to launch the Phase IV of the Global Programme on Elimination of FGM: Uganda Chapter on the same day. She said during the time, the Joint Programme in Uganda has attained remarkable achievements.

The global programme on elimination of FGM is funded by Austria, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Canada and Germany. The joint programme has also leveraged on the funding from the EU Spotlight Initiative in Uganda which has enabled scaling up of interventions.
The first quarter of 2023 was marked by a sequence of important events. UNFPA continued to work with the government of Uganda and partners to accelerate progress toward achieving the three transformative results of zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and other harmful practices.

In quarter one, UNFPA Uganda, in collaboration with UNFPA ESARO, supported the UNFPA FGM HackLab project, which aims at empowering young people, particularly women and girls, by providing them with the opportunity with platforms for collaboration and mentorship to tap opportunities and turn their ideas into transformative solutions and be game changers and drivers of a sustainable green future. The project also highlighted Uganda’s Innovation work on hastening progress towards the three transformative results.

With funding from the Norwegian government, UNFPA Uganda launched a three-year project aimed at advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth in the Eastern Uganda districts of Kamuli and Mayuge in the Busoga region. The ‘EYE’ project aims to ensure that every adolescent and youth in the regions, particularly those who are least fortunate, have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, as well as the ability to exercise reproductive rights free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. This was a great milestone towards ensuring that every pregnancy is wanted and young person’s potential is fulfilled.

In partnership with the UN Country Team, UNFPA also supported the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) with digital equipment to ensure a successful and legitimate exercise ahead of the National Housing and Population Census 2023. This will provide the necessary statistics on Uganda’s demographic structure to monitor progress and impact future planning and decision making aimed at social and economic transformation.

These stories and more show some of the actions towards achieving our greater mission of ensuring rights and choices for all. We thank our donors and partners for their continued generous support.

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UNFPA boosts Uganda Bureau of Statistics with computers and accessories ahead of Uganda’s first digitized National Population and Housing Census 2023


The equipment which included 10 Desktop computers for large dataset processing and 10 Desktop computers for GIS Mapping is appropriate in supporting georeferenced data and analysis of large data sets.

Census night has been gazetted for the night of August 24/25 and the exercise will take 10 days up to 3rd September 2023. This will be the 6th post-independence Census and the first digital Census conducted in Uganda.

While handing over the equipment to UBOS Executive director Mr. Chris Mukiza, UNFPA Uganda Representative Dr. Mary Otieno underscored the importance of quality data in guiding policy decisions, service delivery and achieving commitments like attaining the middle-income status.

She said UNFPA has always provided and will continue to provide support, and assist the government address the financial and technical barriers to the successful implementation of the Census exercise.

“UNFPA’s mandate on data and evidence generation is to strengthen national capacities to ensure that population and housing censuses are of high quality in terms of generation, analysis, dissemination and utilization of the data and undertaken in a timely manner, relevant, and disaggregated according to international principles and standards. In collaboration with the office of the UN Country Team, UNFPA will continue to support UBOS to ensure a successful and credible census in Uganda,” Dr. Otieno said.
The Representative pointed out that the Census will provide required data on Uganda’s population structure to measure the progress made and to influence subsequent planning and decision making geared at social economic transformation.

Executive Director UBOS Dr. Chris Mukiza said a Census exercise is among the most complex and massive undertakings that no country can undertake without support. He said the Census exercise is estimated to cost the government USD 102.6 million.

“This exercise involves mapping the entire country, mobilizing and training many enumerators, conducting public advocacy campaigns, canvassing all households, compiling vast amounts of data, electronic form, and analyzing and disseminating data. Partnering with other stakeholders including development partners, private sector is therefore critical,” Mr. Mukiza said.

The last NPHC was undertaken in August / September 2014. Then, the total population of Uganda recorded was 34.6 million persons, representing an increase of 10.4 million persons from the 2002 census.

UNFPA hands over to UNHCR, reusable sanitary pads for menstruating women and girls in refugee hosting communities

KAMPALA: On February 24, UNFPA handed over a consignment of Menstrual Health Management commodities (Reusable Sanitary Towels) for girls and mothers in refugee hosting districts.

UNFPA contributed 39,215 reusable sanitary pads worth USD 200,000 (UGX 720,000,000) to fill a gap in provision of menstrual health hygiene commodities in refugee hosting districts which has a refugee population of over 1.5 million people.

The items were handed over to Ms. Enid Ochieng Senior Protection Officer UNHCR Uganda by Deputy Representative UNFPA Uganda Mr. Daniel Alemu. Ms. Ochieng represented UNHCR Deputy Representative Jason Alan Hepps.
“UNFPA considers the needs of menstruating women and girls as a fundamental rights issue and is committed to create a world where no woman or girl is prevented from accomplishing her potential due to her menstrual period,” Mr. Alemu said at the handover ceremony that took place at the UNFPA offices in Kampala.

The Deputy Representative said in Uganda, lack of access to sanitary pads has been recognized as one of the drivers of school absenteeism and consequent dropout, exposing girls to teenage pregnancy and early marriage.

He said women and girls may be excluded from daily activities because of stigma, shame or discrimination or because they are considered unclean.

In others, menarche may lead to child marriage or sexual violence because it signals a girl is ready for motherhood or sexual activity.

“Displacement because of conflict or climate disaster has robbed women and girls of their dignity when they have difficulty managing their periods and this exacerbates their vulnerability,” Mr. Alemu said.

Ms. Ochieng appreciated the gesture exhibited by UNFPA which she said demonstrates the spirit of delivering as One UN.

In conclusion, Mr Alemu reiterated UNFPA’s commitment to continue supporting the Government of Uganda towards ensuring access to quality sexual and reproductive health services including menstrual health.
UNFPA Boosts Ministry of Health with Maternal Health services for safer motherhood in West Nile and Acholi Sub regions

KAMPALA: UNFPA in partnership with the Kingdom of Netherlands handed over equipment to the Ministry of Health to support maternal Health services in West Nile and Acholi Sub regions. The event took place at the Ministry of Health Headquarters in Kampala on March 3.

The occasion marked another stride in ensuring the provision of quality care for the ones that need it most - especially the women and young people - without exception to strengthen maternal and newborn services.

With funding from the Netherlands Embassy in Uganda partnership with UNFPA Supplies partnership project, the equipment worth USD 80,000 (296 Million Uganda shillings) is expected to address some of the equipment needs as well as improving the quality of care in labor and delivery of mothers. The items donated included Delivery beds, Sterilization drums, Oxygen Concentrators, Fetal Dopplers, BP machines, Pulse-oximeters, Ambulance bags for resuscitation, delivery sets and Obstetric surgery kits. A total of 200,000 stock cards worth USD 20,000 (73 million Ugandan shillings) were also handed over to bridge the existing gaps in the inventory management practices being utilized by over 900 health facilities.

In her remarks, UNFPA country Representative Dr. Mary Otieno commended the Ministry of Health for providing much-needed leadership for health care across the country.

“In a very recent report released on Global trends in maternal mortality 2000–2020 - estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division-, indicated that Uganda had made significant progress of 15 percent reduction in maternal mortality from 336 to 284 deaths per 100,000 births in 5 years. These results are a testament to the ministry’s leadership in this area,” Dr. Otieno said.
The Representative said UNFPA is fully committed to taking on the daring challenge to achieve the three transformative goals of ending preventable maternal deaths: ending the unmet need for family planning and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices.

For instance, with funding from different donors and in particular the Netherlands Embassy, Dr. Otieno said, UNFPA has been supporting a health system strengthening programme in over 200 health facilities in the West Nile and Acholi sub-regions, a programme which started in 2020 and will be ending in September 2023.

Minister of State (General Duties) Hon Kawooya thanked UNFPA for the continued support in ensuring that every pregnancy is wanted, and every childbirth is safe in an effort to achieve the sustainable development goals.

“I would like to urge everyone to continue working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the remaining seven years to ensure Universal health coverage and quality health care for all,” Hon kawooya said.

My Body, My Life, My World!” EYE Universal SRHR Project launched to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for adolescents and youth in Busoga region

KAMULI: A three-year project aimed at advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and youth in the Eastern Uganda districts of Kamuli and Mayuge in the Busoga region has been launched by the Kyabazinga of Busoga His Royal Highness William Wilberforce Gabula Nadiope on March 16. The project was launched in the presence of the Deputy Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda Mr. Ole Reidar Bergum, the UNFPA Deputy Representative Mr. Daniel Alemu and other high level officials.

The EYE Universal SRHR Project envisions ensuring every adolescent and youth in the two districts of Kamuli and Mayuge, especially those furthest behind, have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services and exercise reproductive rights, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.

Funded through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda, the project worth NOK 45,000,000 (approximately USD 4,491,012) will be implemented by UNFPA in partnership with Marie Stopes Uganda, CARE International and Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre under the tagline “My Body, My Life, My World.”

UNFPA Country Representative Dr Mary Otieno giving remarks during the handover of Equipments at the Ministry of Health Headquarters in Kampala. PHOTO: UNFPA/Evelyn Matsamura Kiapi
In his remarks, UNFPA Deputy Representative Mr. Daniel Alemu said in Uganda, today’s adolescents and youth who are over 78 percent of the population are key to shaping social and economic development, challenging social norms and values, and building the foundation of the world’s future.

“While notable progress has been made, many young people – especially adolescent girls – are denied the investments and opportunities that they require to realize their full potential. In Uganda, sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescents and young women have remained largely unmet,” he noted.

He said the project will contribute towards ensuring that every adolescent and youth everywhere, especially those furthest behind, have access to integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights information and services and exercise reproductive rights, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence, and will positively impact on reducing maternal deaths and unintended teenage pregnancies.

“It is hoped that the project will positively impact on reducing unintended pregnancies, teenage pregnancies, and maternal deaths. It will also empower adolescents and young people, including those in hard-to-reach communities and those most at risk, to decide over their own bodies, make informed choices, and utilize high quality, integrated SRHR information and services,” Alemu added.

In his remarks, the Deputy Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy Mr. Ole Reidar Bergum said sexual and reproductive health and rights is a global priority for Norway.

“We are happy to support the Government of Uganda through our partners to achieve its goals of reducing child marriage, gender-based violence and teenage pregnancies through increasing access to SRHR services in Kamuli and Mayuge districts,” he said. The Deputy Ambassador added that promoting and protecting sexual and reproductive health is essential to achieve gender equality and prevent unnecessary deaths and suffering.

“Modern contraceptives allow women, girls and their partners to decide the number, spacing and timing of children, and some also prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections. Having access to these contraceptives is both a public health and a human rights issue,” the Deputy Ambassador said.

The three-year project will be implemented in alignment with the Human Capital Development Programme Implementation Action Plan with its implementation guided and overseen by the line Ministries of Health, Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and will reach a total of 278,061 young people aged 10–24 years which will represent almost 70 percent of Uganda’s population aged 10–24 years.
Ensuring access to sexual and Reproductive Health, free from gender-based violence.

Delivering an Integrated Package of Rights to Achieve Universal Coverage in Karamoja and Northern Uganda” phase II project launched.

MOROTO DISTRICT: The Universal Coverage in Karamoja phase II project was launched in Moroto on March 24. The project aims at delivering an integrated package of rights to achieve universal coverage in Karamoja and Northern Uganda.

The two-year project partnership between UNFPA and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) will run till December 2024, aimed at empowering women and girls to exercise their rights to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights free from gender-based violence.

The project also aims at consolidating gains made under the project on Strengthening Capacity to Deliver an Integrated Package of Rights in Karamoja and Northern Uganda, 2019–2022. The project will deepen the interventions delivered in the first phase while incorporating emerging issues in gender-based violence prevention and response in Uganda to realize sustainable change.

In his remarks, UNFPA Deputy Representative in Uganda Mr. Daniel Alemu said the project uniquely demonstrates the indivisibility of rights and needs to follow a survivor-centered approach for those women and girls left furthest behind ensuring access to justice for all in Uganda.

“Globally and in Uganda, we need to double down our efforts to eliminate Gender-based violence. Governments, donors, civil society organizations, communities and religious and cultural institutions are galvanizing advocacy efforts and sharing innovations and knowledge to end Violence Against Women and Girls,” Mr. Alemu said.
Deputy Representative, Mr. Daniel Alemu giving his remarks during the launch of the project in Moroto on March 24, 2023. PHOTO: UNFPA Uganda

Stakeholders pose for a group photo after signing the commitment board during the launch. PHOTO: UNFPA Uganda

Ending gender-based violence will not only protect girls from issues that endanger their lives and health, but it will also boost the country’s economy by putting more young people to work and lowering the costs of addressing the damage perpetrators,” said Head of office Austrian Development Cooperation in Uganda Dr. Roswitha Kremser.

Under Phase one, Dr. Kremser said, the special court sessions realized an increase in conviction rate for SGBV cases from less than 20% to 74%, and through an improved victim-centered approach, handling of cases were strengthened. Coordination between key actors also galvanized support of cultural institutions, which are very influential in the communities to promote positive values and tackle harmful traditional practices such as FGM and early marriages, she added.

The two-year project costs 3,227,586 Euros will be co-financed at 99.4 percent ADC (EUR 3,030,000) and 6.1 percent (EUR 181,779) UNFPA core resources.

Head of office Austrian Development Cooperation in Uganda Dr. Roswitha Kremser said: “Ending gender-based violence will not only protect girls from issues that endanger their lives and health, but it will also boost the country’s economy and health, but it will also boost the country’s economy by putting more young people to work and lowering the costs of addressing the damage perpetrators.”

She added that the Phase II is very critical as it aims to consolidate gains made under the Phase one project on strengthening Capacity to Deliver an Integrated Package of Rights in Karamoja and Northern Uganda.

Dr Kremser Roswitha, the Representative of the Austrian Embassy in Uganda giving remarks during the launch of phase II project in Moroto.
Innovations for FGM abandonment

Young innovators merge to accelerate ending gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

KAMPALA: On 27 – 28 March 2023 the UNFPA HackLab Support Hub Project Visited Uganda. Supported by the UNFPA East and Southern Africa Region Office (ESARO), the two-day site visit intended to inform incubation design and implementation, strengthen the collaborative partnership with implementing partners and assigned innovators and provide an opportunity for partners to share their lessons learned best practices, successes, and concerns.

The first day of the UNFPA FGM HackLab project took place at Hive Colab Hub in Kampala which was an opportunity for UNFPA representatives to learn more about the innovative work being done in the region and to engage with partners.

Day two of the event took place at UNFPA Uganda Country Office, presided by the Deputy representative Mr. Daniel Alemu.

This meeting involving representatives from ESARO met with innovators and other developing partners to identify opportunities for collaboration and integration of innovation solution in the UNFPA and other agencies country programme delivery, strengthen the environment for potential future collaboration and communication between the innovators and the UN country offices, facilitate opportunities for access to markets for the solutions with local development partners through facilitated discussions; and draw a roadmap for technical inputs as well as implementation in Uganda. In his remarks, UNFPA Deputy Representative Uganda, Mr. Daniel Alemu reaffirmed UNFPA’s commitment to using innovation as an accelerator and a way of doing business across all areas of the organization’s mandate.

“We need people from within the community to come and propose some of the solutions because the best solutions come from within,” Mr. Alemu said.
Sydney Hushie, Innovation specialist from UNFPA Esaro regional office, stated that UNFPA is looking forward to supporting the mainstream of technology so as to support innovation in low income settings as well as ensuring non-connected young people and communities build partnerships and grow on innovation ecosystems.

“We want to strengthen our internal capacity and improve the ways of working so that innovators are not the only ones driving innovation within the Uganda country office, but everybody else in the office,” Hushie noted.

In 2021, UNFPA, with support of Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme in partnership with the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and AfriLabs leveraged AfriLabs’ existing pipeline of innovation hubs across the locations of the innovators to provide robust and intensive 6-months incubation programme, which entails capacity building activities focused on product and business development of the selected innovations, and support with resources and opportunities to produce full-fledged viable and scalable innovations and solutions.

ESARO initiated an innovation project targeting young innovators, especially women and girls, who have innovative solutions that will accelerate efforts towards ending gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030. Following the evaluation process, four innovators were selected as winners (two winners being from Uganda, Deborah Nassanga and Joseph Mulabbi) in a final pitch event after the boot camps which ultimately qualified them for an AfriLabs-implemented 6 months’ business incubation programme.

Nassanga’s winning solution was a mobile app that collects and analyses crowdsourced anonymous reports on FGM practices, while Joseph Mulabbi’s winning solution was a mobile platform that empowers victims and survivors to get help - linking them to the right service providers.

Mr. Joseph Mulabbi, one of the innovators, elucidated that they are trying to develop a mobile app on an online platform for people who do not have access to the Internet in the hard-to-reach areas.

“Poverty is a lead factor that is facilitating FGM in those various communities as well the absence of professional mentors and councilors,” he said.

Mr. Mulabbi’s mobile platform enables the user to make a toll-free call to a community volunteer to report incidences of FGM and links them to the right service provider.
January 11, 2023:
Members of Parliament from south Sudan’s Parliamentarians forum on Food security, Population & Development met UNFPA Representative in Uganda Dr Mary Otieno to learn best practices from the Parliament of Uganda engagement on population issues under the South –to-South Cooperation.

March 2, 2023:
Working with cultural leaders to advance access to SRHR for women and young people in Busoga region: UNFPA Uganda Representative Dr. Mary Otieno met the Kyabanzinga of Busoga William Wilberforce Kadhumbla Gabula Nadiope IV to discuss partnership and collaboration to end teenage pregnancy and child marriage in the Busoga region.

February 3, 2023:
Country Director Amref Health Africa in Uganda, Dr. Patrick Kagurusi met with UNFPA Uganda Representative Dr Mary Otieno to discuss partnerships to advance Sexual and Reproductive health and rights for women, girls and young people in Uganda.
March 2, 2023:
Strengthening partnerships and Collaboration to increase the utilization of integrated SRHR services for adolescents and youth: UNFPA representative in Uganda Dr. Mary Otieno and Marie Stopes Country Director Carole Sekimpi met to discuss ways of accelerating progress on advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Uganda.

March 3, 2023:
Austrian Ambassador Resident in Addis Ababa H.E Dr Simone Knapp met UNFPA Uganda Representative Dr. Mary Otieno, accompanied by Austrian development Uganda Head of office Dr. Roswitha Kremser to discuss projects to strengthen capacity to deliver an integrated package of rights.

March 17, 2023:
March 17, 2023: UNFPA Representative in Uganda Dr. Mary Otieno met with the Executive Director Absa Bank Uganda Mumba Kulifungwa. The two discussed explored possibilities of collaboration & partnerships to advance Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and GBV prevention for Women, Girls and Young people.
March 21, 2023: UNFPA Representative in Uganda Dr. Mary Otieno paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador of Japan to Uganda H.E Hidemoto Fukuzawa to discuss ways of strengthening partnerships to advance Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for women and girls. At global level Japan is one of UNFPA's top core resources partner on SRHR.

March 31, 2023: UNFPA Representative in Uganda Dr. Mary Otieno paid a courtesy call on Ambassador of Ireland to Uganda H.E Kevin Colgan. They discussed partnership opportunities to advance the reproductive health and rights of vulnerable women and girls in Uganda.