



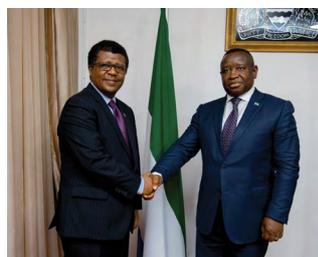
Newsletter

UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Programme Visit to Sierra Leone

Tuesday, 18 June – Friday, 21 June 2019



Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
P.6



Courtesy call to H.E. President Julius Maada Bio
P.7

Welcome to sweet Salone

On Tuesday, 18 June 2019, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director for programme Mr. Dereje Wordofa arrived in Sierra Leone. Accompanying him was UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Mr. Mabingue Ngom and Regional Desk Specialist, Rose Sarr.

In capacity as UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, it was Mr. Wordofa's first visit to the small West African country, and one which we hoped he will remember fondly.

At the Guinea and Sierra Leone border, Mr. Wordofa was met by UNFPA Sierra Leone country representative Dr. Kim Eva Dickson and staff members from UNFPA and UN Department of Safety and Security.



Someone called the midwives

After a two and half hour drive from the Guinea border, the Deputy Executive Director arrived in Freetown, the country's capital.

On arrival to his hotel, Mr. Wordofa was welcomed by two midwives from the National School of Midwifery in Freetown who presented him with his briefing pack for his visit.

Since 2010, UNFPA has supported the training of midwives in Sierra Leone. As a result of UNFPA's support and funding from UK aid, the number of competent midwives in the country increased from 95 (2010) to 754 (2018), a 793 per cent increase in under nine years.



Introduction to UNFPA staff in Sierra Leone

As a first port of call, the Deputy Executive Director met with staff from the UNFPA Sierra Leone country office where he recognised the contribution of staff, and thanked them for their achievements in strengthening the health system in the country.

He stated that our success will be seen in being able to deliver high quality health care. “Our efforts is to help strengthen the health system in the country in a sustainable way,” said Mr. Wordofa.

He briefed the staff on the Summit to commemorate the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and sexual and reproductive health for sustainable development. He said, “The Nairobi Summit aims to accelerate commitments made in 1994. The Summit is not only for discourse, but for action. Sierra Leone played an important role in ICPD and the plan of action for the SDGs.”



Interaction with UNFPA Sierra Leone implementing partners

Undertaking the vital work on the ground in Sierra Leone, Mr. Wordofa, met with some of our 21 implementing partners, who include Government and non-governmental organisations. An interactive meeting with staff and implementing partners took place discussing the collaborative work undertaken in the country.

UNFPA has been operating in Sierra Leone since 1971 and provides the Government of Sierra Leone and its partners with comprehensive technical support to implement programmes and improve knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, population issues, and adolescents and youth.



Introduction to UN Sierra Leone country team

A key meeting for Mr. Wordofa was with UN Resident Coordinator, Mr. Sunil Saigal and heads of UN agencies in Sierra Leone. Currently 16 UN agencies are resident in Sierra Leone. Discussion items included new reforms of the UN Development system being implemented to strengthen capability for supporting the Sustainable Development Goals; formulation of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Common Country Analysis.



Inspiring visit to Women in Crisis Movement Centre

On Wednesday, 19 June Mr. Wordofa visited the Women in Crisis Movement centre to learn more about how they support survivors of gender-based violence to access services for psychosocial counselling, case investigations, clinical and legal services. Upon arrival at the centre, Mr. Wordofa was welcomed with a joyous cultural song and dance followed by a conducted tour. The conducted tour was led by the Director of Women in Crisis Movement and allowed for interaction with adolescent girls and young women who are participating in the training sessions. He was particularly struck by one girl's story of being married at age 18 to a 67-year-old man but is now gaining skills for economic empowerment.





UNFPA supports Women in Crisis Movement to promote and enhance knowledge on sexual reproductive health and rights and the prevention of and response to gender-based violence for vulnerable, marginalized young women and adolescent girls. Women's empowerment is promoted with specific focus placed on women and adolescent girls who are vulnerable, including survivors of gender-based violence, commercial sex workers and people living with HIV/AIDS. This is undertaken by raising their socio-economic status through livelihood skills training for self-reliance. They are trained in hairdressing, cosmetology, dress-making and design, catering, soap making, handicraft and functional literacy. Women who have gone through the programme are gainfully employed and own businesses. UNFPA also supports Women in Crisis Movement to empower vulnerable girls under the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage.

During his visit, Mr. Wordofa engaged with young women who serve as mentors to adolescent girls in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. The mentors described their aspirations, hopes and dreams for the future and how the programme has built their confidence to empower other young girls in their communities.



At the Centre Mr. Wordofa met the Executive Director of Fambul Initiative Network for Equality (FINE-SL) and male advocacy peer educators, where he learnt about the various interventions and successes in engaging men in support of women through husband schools. Recognising the deep-rooted gender stereotypes that exist in Sierra Leone, UNFPA supports FINE-SL to engage men in various communities. FINE-SL has established male peer educator network centres which provide platforms for men to discuss key gender issues, including; masculinity, patriarchal constructs, and harmful beliefs and practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.



Also discussed, was a key innovation referred to as 'Pamama' (papa and mama) where men and their partners come together to discuss key issues including reproductive health and family planning. Another key discussion was held about the engagement with traditional and religious leaders. As a result of these interventions: a total of 120 communities signed Memorandums of Understanding to end child marriage and other harmful practices in Sierra Leone.



Dinner meeting with Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development

In the evening of Wednesday, 19 June, Mr. Wordofa had a dinner engagement with the Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Dr. Robert Michael Komba Chakanda. During the meeting, Mr. Wordofa congratulated the Ministry and the Government for the excellent chairing by the Sierra Leone delegation during the Africa Regional Review meeting of ICPD25 in Accra and

subsequently, the global review during the 52nd session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in New York.

He acknowledged the appointment of the new Minister, Dr. Francis Kaikai and that Dr. Kaikai is a member of the International Steering Committee on the Nairobi Summit. He also acknowledged the Ministry's efforts and critical role in facilitating the preparation of the government's new "Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023) Education for Development", representing the fourth generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for the country and expressed delight that UNFPA is part of the process.

Lastly, he expressed appreciation of the Government's approval of the revised National Population Policy, which will serve as a blueprint for addressing diverse national population issues, including the demographic dividend.

Meeting with Ms. Nabeela Tunis, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

On Thursday, 20 June, Mr. Wordofa met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ms. Nabeela Tunis. Mr. Wordofa recognised the Government of Sierra Leone for its strong commitment to sexual and reproductive health and the need to address teenage pregnancy as articulated in the draft National Development Plan.

He congratulated the Ministry and the Government for Sierra Leone's active participation in the Africa Regional Review meeting of ICPD25 in Accra, and talked of the need for countries to renew their commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action. The Deputy Executive Director gave his assurances of a scaling up of UNFPA support to Sierra Leone in addressing women's reproductive health and rights, adolescents, youth and gender, population and data for development.



Courtesy call to H.E. President Julius Maada Bio

The Deputy Executive Director paid a courtesy call to H.E. President Julius Maada Bio and applauded the President for his declaration of rape and sexual violence as a national emergency, and highlighted that his stance on gender-based violence would serve as a strong example to others. He also congratulated the President on his successful launching of the Free Quality Education Initiative for all children and adolescents in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Wordofa also stressed the importance of the First Lady's Campaign, "Hands off our Girls" which aims to tackle gender-based violence, adolescent pregnancy and child marriage and which is supported by UNFPA.

He briefed the President of UNFPA's 50th anniversary as well the commemoration of 25 years since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). He emphasized that the Nairobi Summit is not just for discourse but for action in securing commitments to move the ICPD forward. The Deputy Executive Director concluded by reiterating UNFPA's commitment to supporting the women and girls of Sierra Leone.



Joint inspection of Rokupa Hospital with Dr. Alpha Wurie, Minister of Health and Sanitation

The Deputy Executive Director visited Rokupa Hospital, which was constructed by the Government of Sierra Leone in partnership with UNFPA and funded by UKaid under the Saving Lives Programme. He met with Dr. Alpha Wurie, Minister of Health and Sanitation as they undertook a joint inspection of the hospital and discuss matters relating to maternal health. He congratulated the Minister on the Government's commitment to reducing maternal and newborn mortality and to addressing sexual and reproductive health especially in the area of reducing teenage pregnancy.

Mr. Wordofa also congratulated the Minister on the various Government supported infrastructural improvements, rehabilitation/reconstruction and equipping of hospitals and community health centres in partnership with UNFPA and with funds from the UK aid, Government of Japan and JICA to improve the quality of care and health outcomes for women and their newborns in the country. He expressed his support to the Minister on the planned absorption/recruitment of about 4000 skilled health workers aimed to increase the number of key health personnel needed in a number of health facilities, especially rural and hard to reach areas.



Mr. Wordofa discussed the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's support to UNFPA's mandate in the country in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, strengthening the health system, ensuring access to family planning information and services is universal, and that harmful practices such as child marriage are addressed with the ultimate aim of elimination.





Red carpet film screening – ICPD25 panel dialogue, launch of SWOP report and UNFPA@50 celebration

In the evening of Thursday, 20 June, UNFPA Sierra Leone held its first exclusive red carpet film screening to mark UNFPA@50 and ICPD25. *City of Joy*, an award-winning documentary, directed by Madeleine Gavin, centres on the first class of female students at a leadership centre located in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a region often referred to as “the worst place in the world to be a woman”. The students have suffered abuse including sexual and gender-based violence during the 20-year war, and by attending the leadership centre, they heal and become powerful voices of change for their country.



After screening the emotive documentary, an important What’s changed? ICPD25 panel discussion with Mr. Wordofa and Diaka Salena Koroma from *Girlz Empowered* was held. The panel discussion covered topics relating to sexual gender-based violence, ICPD going forward, and empowering youth. After the interactive panel discussion, Mr. Wordofa launched the 2019 UNFPA State of World Population report, ‘Unfinished Business: The pursuit of rights and choices for all.



To celebrate UNFPA@50 and ICPD25, we hosted a reception with Mr. Wordofa, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director; Mr. Mabingue Ngom, UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa; Vicky the Poet; Diaka Salena Koroma, *Girlz Empowered*; Dr. Kim Eva Dickson, UNFPA Sierra Leone Country Representative; and Ms. Yvonne Aki-Sawyers, Mayor of Freetown, who all assisted in cutting the special UNFPA@50 and ICPD25 cake.

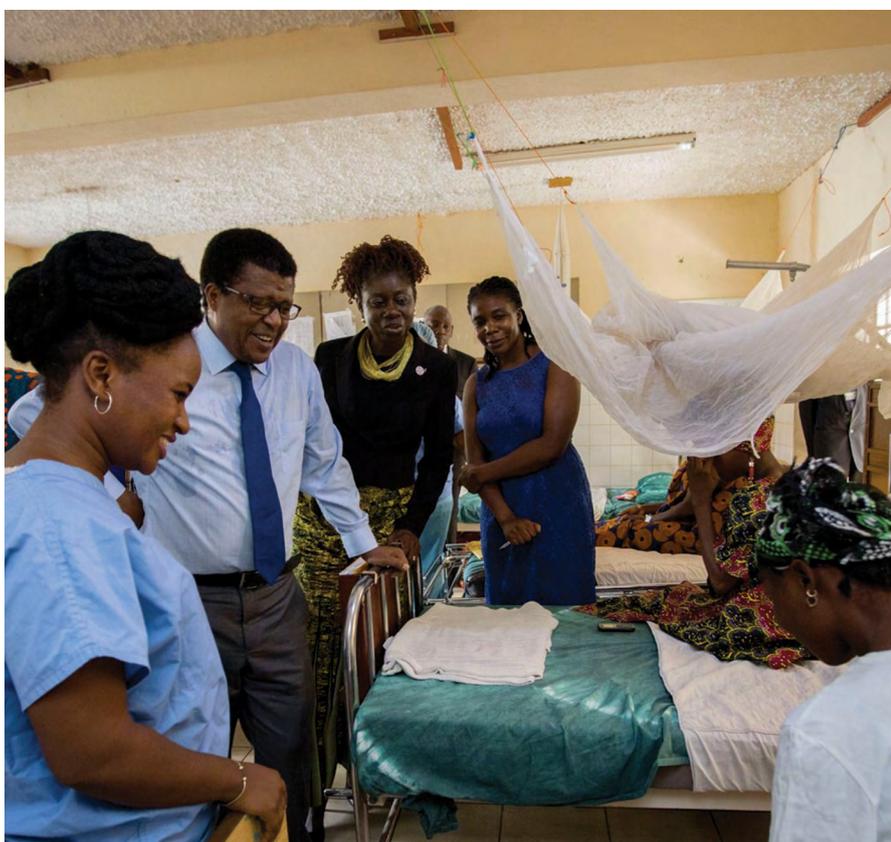


Breakfast meeting with key donors – Irish Aid and DFID

On Friday, 21 June, Mr. Wordofa met with Ms. Sandra Baldwin, the Deputy Head of the UK Department for International Development and Ms. Mary O'Neill, Head of Development and Irish Aid. He thanked DfID and Irish Aid for their longstanding collaboration with UNFPA on reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, and gender issues. He highlighted the current funding of £36 million for the Joint UN (UNFPA, UNICEF WHO) Saving Lives in Sierra Leone programme and the successes of the Saving Lives in Sierra Leone Phase I programme which included: Strengthened health information systems at national and district level; improved infrastructure to save the lives of women, newborns, children and adolescents, with eight improved EmONC facilities; adolescent friendly health services; and WASH facilities in community health posts upgraded. Additionally, he welcomed the introduction of new family planning methods SUBQ DMPA (SayanaPress) and Levoplant to the country.

He expressed appreciation of Irish Aid funding to support the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to integrate comprehensive sexuality education and expand family life education in the formal education curriculum of Sierra Leone. He also thanked them for their support to the Girls' Access to Education and Services (GATES) project and the Strengthening Multi-sectoral Responses to Adolescent Pregnancy (StRAP) projects.

He highlighted the successes of the GATES project in providing improved access to sexual reproductive health information and services, and gender-based violence prevention and response services to over 15,000 adolescents, both in-school and out-of-school.



Emotive visit to Aberdeen Women's Centre

Recognising that for women to suffer from obstetric fistula is a grave injustice, Mr. Wordofa visited the Aberdeen Women's Centre to meet with fistula clients, who are often the poorest, most marginalized women in Sierra Leone. On the Fistula Ward, Mr. Wordofa interacted with young fistula clients and survivors, heard their stories and listened to their aspirations. He was visibly moved by their harrowing stories where they were ostracized from their families and their communities because of their condition. He also met with a group of lactating and pregnant first time adolescent mothers-to-be.



Mr. Wordofa mentioned that it was the first time he had seen so many adolescent mothers in one place together. Mr. Wordofa toured the on-site Family Planning Clinic where he observed all the family planning commodities provided by UNFPA. He was also introduced to the resident fistula surgeon who has performed over 100 fistula surgeries within 10 months since her arrival to the Centre. In a 'gladi gladi' ceremony to mark completion of their fistula surgery, three fistula survivors danced in celebration of being dry, clean and completely healed. Mr. Wordofa, danced alongside them with AWC staff to share their joy and new lease on life.

UNFPA's obstetric fistula programmes focus on three key areas of intervention: prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation as well as reintegration of patients. UNFPA currently supports two out of three organizations providing fistula services in Sierra Leone, making it the main agency funding fistula interventions in the country. UNFPA works with implementing partners Aberdeen Women's Centre and Haikal which provide a holistic set of services for fistula patients and survivors. Aberdeen Women's Centre's main role is the provision of surgical treatment for patients, while Haikal focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration.

Press conference: Advocating for the achievement of the three transformative goals

To wrap up his visit to Sierra Leone, Mr. Wordofa, held a press conference with national print and broadcast media representatives where he spoke about the need to reduce maternal and infant mortality, teenage pregnancies and gender-based violence.

He also stressed the importance of access to universal health care, family planning, engaging youth, and ending harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.



For more information, please contact: Ms. Angelique Reid, Communications Specialist
 UNFPA Sierra Leone
 M: +232 78 340044
 E: areid@unfpa.org



United Nations Population Fund
12-16 New Signal Hill Road
Off Congo Cross
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Tel: +232 79 327330
Email: registry.sl.org
Website: sierraleone.unfpa.org

Follow us on

