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## Investing in teenage girls



Rwanda joined the rest of the world to celebrate the World Population day on 31st July, 2016 in Gatsibo District, Eastern Province. This year's World Population Day theme "Investing in teenage girls, calls for action to address the enormous challenges faced by teenage girls across the world

The Demographic and Health Survey 2014/2015 indicates an increase in childbearing among teenage girls in Rwanda from 6.1 percent in 2010 to 7.3 percent in 2015. Although still low compared to other countries in the region, the slight increase highlights the need to implement effective strategies to reverse the trend. Easy access to quality sexual and reproductive health services and Comprehensive Sexuality Education can help to protect adolescent girls

from the negative health and social effects of early childbearing; poor maternal and child health, school dropout and a continued cycle of poverty.

*"The new development agenda calls on us to leave no one behind. To reach those furthest behind, leaders and communities must focus on and stand up for the human rights of the most marginalized teenage girls, particularly those who are poor, out of school, exploited, or subjected to harmful practices, including child marriage. Marginalized girls are vulnerable to poor reproductive health and more likely to become mothers while still children themselves. They have a right to understand and control their own bodies and shape their own lives."*

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director in his statement to mark this year's World Population Day.



World  
Population  
Day 2016 !



*“Teenage pregnancy is an issue that affects the very fabric of family and society. Investing in teenage girls is an opportunity for them to stay in school and to some extent prevents teenage pregnancies, HIV/AIDS infection and early marriages. It would ensure they realize their potential and contribute to the socio-economic well-being of our society,”* Claver Gatete, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning said.



*“Global statistics shows that, in developing countries, 20,000 girls of between 15 and 19 give birth every day, a third of girls are married before they turn 18, while one third give birth before 20. Most of them are poor, less educated and living in rural areas. Countries must invest in the health and education of young people, especially teenage girls and create opportunities for them to realize their potential. Without education, with poor health, little or no control over their bodies, teenage girls’ futures can be derailed and their potentials would never be realized,”* Lamin Manneh, One UN Resident Coordinator



*“A lot more effort is needed to fully empower young girls to make informed choices that will determine their future. Poor rural girls with limited or no access to sexual reproductive health services are at higher risk of becoming pregnant or falling victims to sexually transmitted diseases. Let everyone commit to helping teenagers make right decisions and help them in case their rights are violated so as to develop our country and the future of everyone,”* Odette Uwamariya, Governor of Eastern province.



*“When a teenage girl has the power, the means and the information to make her own decisions in life, she is more likely to overcome obstacles that stand between her and a healthy productive future. This empowerment and access to means and information will benefit her, her family and her community”* Mr. Jozef Maeriën, UNFPA Rwanda Representative.



*“When countries invest in the health and education of their youth, especially teenage girls, and create opportunities for them to realize their full potential, they are also better positioned to realize a demographic dividend, which can propel economic growth to combat poverty”* Mr. Daniel Alemu, Deputy Representative UNFPA Rwanda

*“Lack of sex education from parents and teachers is the main cause of pregnancies among teenagers. Those who are lucky to have people who educate them about these issues should take heed of their advice”* Diane Munyana, a teenager in Gatsibo

*“Poverty is the root cause of pregnancies among teenagers. parents are the ones to blame. When you follow your children up and discuss with them sexual reproductive health issues, they will most certainly follow the right way,”* Silvere Munzanire, a parent.

# Support Data production for planning and decision making



15 Toyota Double Cabins transferred ownership to NISR by UNFPA

A core element of UNFPA's mission is, to support countries in using population data for policies and programs.

In the same spirit, UNFPA has supported production of quality and reliable data through the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) for years. To ensure timely collection of data and smooth running of statistics activities, 15 vehicles Toyota double cabins were transferred to the ownership of the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) office on 25th July 2016, a big asset for the success of the activities of the organization. "These vehicles have been a valuable asset to the institution and will continue to be so now with the transfer of full ownership to NISR for the success of the activities of the organisation.

*"These vehicles will continue to facilitate data collection for evidence based planning. We are grateful for UNFPA's valuable support,"* said Yusuf Murangwa, NISR Director General.

In continued support to the work of national census and data collection for demographic and health surveys by the statistics office on behalf of the government of Rwanda, the 15 pickups worth USD 600,000 about 480 Million RWF at the time of procurement in 2010, were procured in preparation for the 2012 population and housing census that was concluded successfully.

*"We are proud of Rwanda leading in many development initiatives in Africa, and with the transfer of ownership of these 15 4WD pickups to NISR, we hope to see this national institute setting the standard for other African countries by being a role model of having reliable and timely updated population data"* said Daniel Alemu, UNFPA Deputy Representative of UNFPA.

**For more details visit;**



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*Visit to the first generation of young girls protection from FGM, Afar Ethiopia, 2015. photo: Nafissatou J. Diop*

## Women's rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services - a path to sustainability

Ministers and gender experts from across Africa convened in Kigali for the African Union High Level Panel to discuss gender equality and women's empowerment, ahead of the 27th African Union Summit.

The Maputo Protocol, which entered into force 13 years ago, is a landmark legal instrument that aims to protect the rights of women, including from any form of discrimination and violence.

Yet some have questioned whether it has done much to safeguard the rights of women. The high level panel's theme, 'The Contributions of Maputo Protocol on Women's Rights in Transforming Gender Roles in Africa: Stocktaking, Opportunities and Accountability', affirmed the Maputo Protocol and interrogated African countries' commitment to uphold women's rights.

Dr. Demola Olajide, Chief of Non-Core Funds Management Unit at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), said women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, especially family planning, should be prioritized as authorities set strategies to invest in education, entrepreneurship, health and agriculture, as a means to empower women and tackle gender inequality. It is a basic need and a human right for all women, including adolescents, as clearly articulated in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, he said.

Unplanned pregnancies and poor maternal health outcomes hinder the success of the programmes and investments put in place to empower women.

*"A woman might miss a planting or harvesting season due to maternal health challenges, which affects the productivity and income of the family in the long run,"* Dr. Olajide said.

### Include rights in RH services



*Photo L-R: Mukabalisa Donatille, Rwanda Parliament Speaker, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, African Union Commission Chairperson, and Dr. Diane Gashuma, Rwanda Minister of Gender and Family Promotion during the summit*

In many African countries, women traditionally have limited rights to take decisions related to family matters, especially when and how many children to have. Larger families are seen as a sign of prestige, yet this may negatively affect the health of women, the finances of their families and can be a burden to the nation.

To ensure respect for human rights, and that of women in particular, the inclusion of rights in reproductive health services should be at the forefront of Africa's commitment in the years ahead.

Young people are the future and women can be Africa's biggest asset – but only if they are given access to good health. For this, governments and donors must make the right investments in their future.

## **Harmful practices against women and girls**

As stipulated in the Maputo Protocol, 'harmful practices' mean all behaviors, attitudes and practices that negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls.

State Parties in Article 5 of the protocol commit to the elimination of harmful practices, and prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices that negatively affect the human rights of women. However, in many African countries girls and women still encounter harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast ironing, child marriage, and sexual and gender-based violence.

*The girl who undergoes FGM is the same girl who is taken out of school early to marry. And this is the same girl who dies before she reaches age 20, giving birth to her third unplanned child.* - Nafissatou J. Diop, UNFPA Senior Adviser

Nafissatou J. Diop, UNFPA Senior Adviser and Coordinator of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM, called for the protection of women who are at risk of being subjected to harmful practices or violence, abuse and intolerance.

When society values and protects girls and they have access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, they are better and able to meet their full potential, benefiting themselves, their families, their countries and the world.

Wudalat, an Ethiopian teenage girl committed to the Gender is My Agenda Campaign in Kigali, said: **“We are just like boys. It's unfortunate that the countries we are born in**



*“Women should not suffer from such harmful practices because they are the heart of the family. There is a long-term impact of harmful practices across the life-span of a woman. The long chain of discrimination starts with marking the girl's body with FGM. No matter how limited resources are, governments and partners should support girls and women's access and rights to sexual and reproductive health,”* Dr. Diop said.

**have cultural malpractices that affect our ability to prove to the world that we can contribute to the prosperity of our country and continent. Empower us and invest in our education to support the fulfillment of our dreams and aspirations towards the Africa We Want.”**