



## Liberia Update

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### UNFPA Supports MoH by deploying Specialist Doctors in three counties

The Ministry of Health, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has recruited and deployed three specialist doctors from Uganda to assist with strengthening the maternal and newborn health sector of Liberia.

The three obstetricians and gynecologists, including Dr. Susan Kimono, Dr. Paul Muwanguzi and Dr. Rosette Namulindwa, are assigned in Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount and Lofa counties until the end of the year.



*Liberia's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Francis Kateh (1st from left) in discussion with the three Specialist Doctors at the Ministry of Health*

Dr. Oluremi Sogunro  
Country Representative

#### UNFPA Representation in Liberia

Cooper Building  
120 UN Drive Mamba Point  
P.O Box 10-0274  
1000 Monrovia, 10 Liberia  
Tel. +231-770004168

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Editorial contact:  
Calixte Hessou  
Advocacy & Communications  
Officer  
E-mail: [hessou@unfpa.org](mailto:hessou@unfpa.org)  
Skype: calixtehess



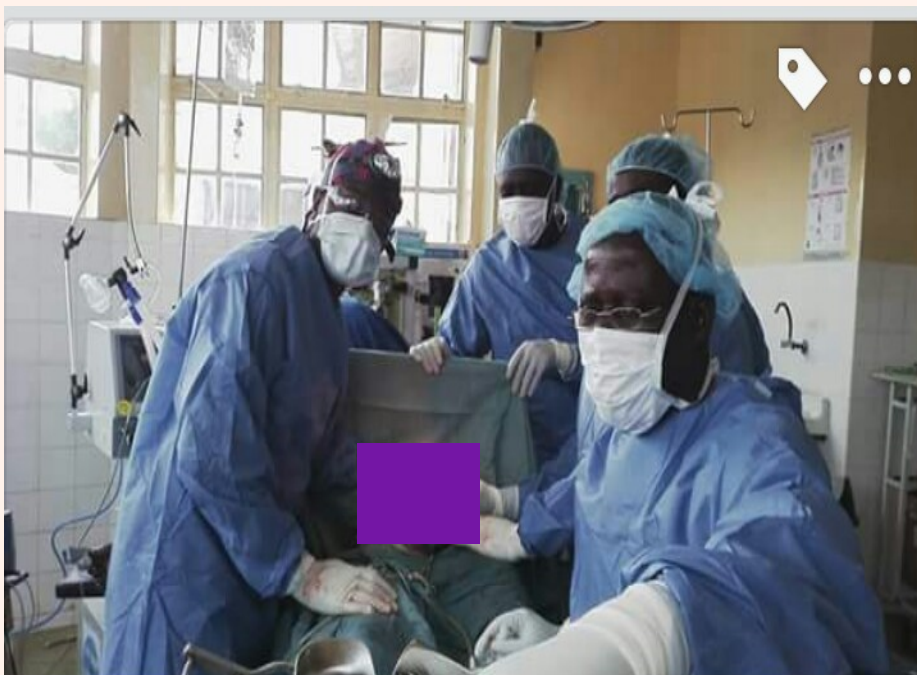
## Liberia Update

### UNFPA Supports MoH by deploying Specialist Doctors in three counties Cont'd

In addition to providing clinical services in those counties where they have been deployed, the Ugandan medical doctors are helping to build the capacity of their young Liberian counterparts through mentorship as well as supporting the overall maternal and newborn health delivery system.

integrated and strengthened maternal health care delivery system in Liberia.

Speaking on behalf of her colleagues, Dr. Susan Kimono said they were glad for the opportunity



**Dr. Paul Muwanguzi (1st from left) and his Liberian colleagues during a procedure at St Timothy Hospital, Robertsport, Grand Cape Mount County**

to serve the people of Liberia. “We will do our best in the delivery of our tasks which are not to only provide medical services but also transfer of knowledge and mentorship to junior Liberian colleagues,” said Dr. Kimono.

Since the launch of Liberia’s Investment Plan for Building a Resilient Health System in June 2015, UNFPA, the Ministry of Health and other partners have been working to ensure the availability of skilled health care providers. It will also improve infrastructure and equipment needed to restore basic social services, including maternal and newborn health services after the Ebola epidemic that plagued the country between March 2014 and mid-2015.

“We are glad that you agreed to come to assist us as we work to improve the maternal and newborn health sector and reduce the number of women dying in childbirth in Liberia,” said Dr. Francis Kateh, Deputy Health Minister and Chief Medical Officer, Republic of Liberia on Monday 30 January when he received the three medical doctors on behalf of Health Minister, Dr. Bernice Dahn.

According to Dr. Kateh, the presence of the three Ugandan doctors will help bridge the gap and accelerate progress towards building a re-



**Dr. Rosette Namulindwa examines a patient at the Tellewoyan Memorial Hospital, Voinjama, Lofa County**



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### Liberian Govt & UNFPA with support from Sweden Launch Programme to Reduce Teenage Pregnancies in Southeast Liberia

In Liberia, the median age at first sexual debut is 16 for females and 18 for males; while 59 per cent of adolescent girls are mothers by age 19, something that is raising serious concerns. Many of these girls end up dropping out school and never to return.

The Government of Liberia in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in February launched a 4-year programme aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies in the South East counties.

The programme seeks to contribute to a reduction in teenage pregnancies through supporting increased access and utilization of Sexual reproductive health and family planning information and services by adolescents.

The implementation of the programme will be led by line government ministries including Health, Gender Children and Social Protection, Education, Youth and Sports and Internal Affairs in collaboration with the Planned



**Grand Gedeh County Superintendent, Mr. Peter Solo pledges the support of his counterparts from River Gee, Maryland and Grand Kru counties as he launches the programme**

The “Empowered and Fulfilled Programme” funded by the Swedish Government will complement other on-going Reproductive Health, Gender and livelihood related projects supported by UN agencies in Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee counties.

It will also build on achievements made at both national and targeted county levels on young people’s sexual reproductive health and rights.

Speaking on February 24<sup>th</sup> in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County at the official launch of the programme, the Head of Development Cooperation and Chargé d’Affaires at the Swedish Embassy in Liberia, Ms. Elisabeth Harleman said adolescent girls and boys need access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services especially outside the urban areas, if there must be a reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies in Liberia.



## Liberia Update

### Liberian Govt & UNFPA Launch Programme to Reduce Teenage Pregnancies in Southeast Liberia Cont'd

According to Ms. Harleman, discussing sexuality for and with young girls and boys is still considered difficult with few information, education and communication outlets involving young people themselves.

“Sweden’s global experience from supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights shows that in order to for young people to be able to take advantage of society’s opportunities, such as education and work, and to contribute to economic growth, young people must be given the opportunity to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sexual life, without coercion, violence, discrimination or the risk of becoming involuntarily pregnant or being infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections,” she said.



***Ms. Elisabeth Harleman, Charge d'Affaires and Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden makes remarks at the program***

She lauded local authorities, traditional leaders as well as key stakeholders from the four South-eastern counties for their declared support for the programme.

Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Grand Gedeh County Superintendent, Mr. Peter L. Solo declared that local authorities would work collaboratively to ensure the reduction in teenage pregnancies in the southeastern region.

“Our traditional and religious leaders will be the principal mechanism that we will use to go into our communities to establish, reinforce the need for collaborative efforts in reducing teenage pregnancy in the region,” Superintendent Solo declared.

Mr. Solo urged the youth people to join the process of educating their peers; discouraging them against early pregnancy.

“We must all sensitize the people and discourage teen pregnancies by our girls so that they have a better education and fulfilled lives,” the Grand Gedeh County official declared.

The launch of the programme followed a tour and the holding of inception meetings with a cross-section of traditional and local leaders and community members in the four counties. The meetings which were led by the various line ministries including the ministries of Internal Affairs, Health, Gender Children and Social Protection, Education, and Youth and Sports, were aimed at understanding factors responsible for early pregnancies. It was also aimed at understanding barrier to SRH by adolescents in the region as well as deriving local solutions to the issue.

Among key issues identified by the people were poor parental guidance and care, sex abuse of adolescent girls by their teachers and influential community members, lack of sexuality education in schools as well as at home between parents and their children.

They stressed the need for sexuality education in schools and the provision of family planning services with ease of access and the reinforcement of the justice system to punish perpetrators of violence against teenage girls and sexual offenders; especially adults who impregnate underage girls.



## Liberia Update

### “Empowered & Fulfilled”- Reducing Teenage Pregnancies in Liberia -Inception Meetings in Southeastern counties in pictures



From left to right: Mr. Dominic Massaquoi, National Coordinator, Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls & Young Women Project, Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection; Mr. Lance Gbagoyon, Deputy Minister for Youth Development, Ministry of Youth & Sports; Ms. Elizabeth Dempster, Superintendent, Grand Kru County; Dr. Joseph Kerkulah, Director, Family Health Division, Ministry of Health; Mr. Elvin Frank, Assistant Minister for Technical Services, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Mr. Augustine Kulah, Assistant Minister for Student Personnel Services, Ministry of Education during a panel discussion at the Inception Meeting in Barclayville, Grand Kru County.



A breakup session by the participants Barclayville, Grand Kru County to brainstorm and identify factors promoting the teenage pregnancy in Liberia.



## Liberia Update

### “Empowered & Fulfilled”- Reducing Teenage Pregnancies in Liberia -Inception Meetings in Southeastern counties in pictures Cont’d



***Mrs. Setta F. Saah, Vice Chairperson, National Traditional Council of Liberia makes a case for all pregnant girls below age 18 girls to be considered victims of statutory rape.***



***The participants identified poor parental guidance and care, sex abuse of adolescent girls by their teachers and influential community members, lack of sexuality education in schools as well as at home between parents and their children as key factors responsible for the rate of teenage pregnancy in Liberia.***



## Liberia Update

### “Empowered & Fulfilled”- Reducing Teenage Pregnancies in Liberia -Inception Meetings in Southeastern counties in pictures Cont’d



***The communities want among other things sexuality education in schools and the provision of family planning services with ease of access and the reinforcement of the justice system to punish perpetrators of violence against teenage girls and sexual offenders; especially adults who impregnate underage girls.***



***From left to right: Mr. Peter L. Solo, Superintendent, Grand Gedeh County, Ms. Elisabeth Harleman, Charge d'Affaires and Head of Development Cooperation and Mr. Charles Lawrence, National Programme Officer, Democratic Governance and Human Rights, Embassy of Sweden take to the airwaves in Zwedru to make the case for reduction in teenage pregnancies in Liberia.***



## Liberia Update

### 13 Fistula Survivors Complete Skills Training

As part of its ongoing programme to prepare fistula survivors who have been treated for social reintegration, the Liberia Fistula Project at the Ministry of Health with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on January 31 graduated 13 fistula survivors from the Fistula Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center in Phebe, Bong County.

The women and girls, who were all treated for obstetric fistula, received training in cosmetology, pastry, tailoring and soap-making.

Obstetric fistula is a hole between the vagina and rectum or bladder that is caused by prolonged obstructed labor, leaving a woman incontinent of urine or feces or both.

Obstetric fistula is a hole between the vagina and rectum or bladder that is caused by prolonged obstructed labor, leaving a woman incontinent of urine or feces or both.

“The government of Liberia has the responsibility to ensure that women are saved during childbirth by providing better health services for them,” he said.

Dr. Jawara said maternal health is a key indicator to an effective health system, as such, all must be done improve the sector especially by training skilled birth attendants.

He said skilled birth attendants and appropriate family planning service are key to the prevention of obstetric fistula.

Also speaking at the program, UNFPA Liberia Assistant Representative Dr. Philderald Pratt called for a collaborative effort to end fistula in Liberia.

According to him, UNFPA has led a global effort to eliminate obstetric fistula since 2003; noting that a much has been done in this direction.



***The graduates received certificates of achievement, starter kits as well as transportation allowance to facilitate return to their respective communities***

“There are challenges that must be addressed in order to eradicate obstetric fistula in Liberia,” Dr. Pratt however said.

He challenged the graduates to serve as ambassadors of the program by encouraging others who are experiencing fistula to come out for treatment.

Dr. Pratt assured of UNFPA’s continuous efforts to eradicate obstetric fistula in Liberia.

Speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Madam Lorpu Sherman said the Ministry was working assiduously to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Liberia.

Speaking during the program, when he served as keynote speaker, Dr. Abraham Jawara, Resident Doctor/OBGYN said it was “a great injustice to women to experience a condition that has almost been eliminated from the developed world”.