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UNFPA THE GAMBIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2000

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## NATIONAL CONTEXT

The high turnover of Civil Servants at various intervals had adversely affected the Population Programme especially in the health sector.

The pronouncement of the Head of State for FGM and the availability of the National TV and Radio to certain religious groups/individuals that are for FGM and against Family Planning in the beginning of the year had had a negative impact on family planning service use.

The Government's Governance record has been questioned by major donors such as the European Union, the British Government, World Bank and IMF and it has created standstill in the funding of some projects.

Recognition of the weaknesses in the planning units of the various institutions in government, in developing an effective poverty and gender focus prompted the Head of State to launch in January 2000, a project in Mainstreaming Poverty and Gender. The objective of the project is to mainstream poverty reduction and gender equality strategies into the planning and implementation of public services, particularly in Education and Health. This will be done through sensitization of Policy makers on poverty and gender issues, providing access to appropriate poverty and gender information for planning and monitoring purposes and developing skills to formulate and analyze policy plans and budgets with attention to poverty and gender concerns.

The launching of the Rapid Response Programme against HIV/AIDS by the Head of State, funded by the World Bank on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2000, was a landmark in recognizing that AIDS exists in The Gambia. Prior to this launching, there has been a denial syndrome by top Government officials of the existence of the virus HIV/AIDS. He also made the pronouncement that Government of The Gambia will not sack HIV infected workers. This will go a long way in reassuring HIV infected persons that they are part of the society.

## PROGRAMME RESULTS

At the programme level, the following achievements were realized:

### PSD Sub-Programme

Although the introduction of POP/FLE in Upper Basic levels such as grades 10-12 was delayed due to the late arrival of the textbooks, efforts are being made to institutionalize and expand Population Family Life Education in the formal school system and tertiary institutions countrywide. Additional materials were purchased to meet the demand created by the increase in school enrolment and expansion, and also to cater for the private schools. An evaluation of the trial instruments used at the Gambia College was done and a review workshop is planned early next year.

A workshop to sensitize the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in regions 1 and 2 was organized to inform parents about the relevance of POP/FLE in the school curriculum and to clear any doubts and misconceptions that might have existed.

Monitoring of POP/FLE in schools has been integrated in the overall Standard and Quality Assurance Programme of the Department of State for Education (DOSE). The School Inspectors will work together with the Regional Training Officers who would have included POP/FLE Teacher Training and monitoring in the regions as part of their regular monitoring schedules to ensure quality of standards.

### Introduction of POP/FLE into the Madrasah Education System

The General Secretariat for Arabic and Islamic Education (GSAIE) was assigned the responsibility for the introduction of POP/FLE into Madrasah institutions especially those under its ambit. 20 out of 76 Madrasah institutions surveyed were piloted. POP/FLE materials were also translated into Arabic and they are as follows:

- POP/FLE Pupils Book grades 4-6
- POP/FLE Teacher's Book grades 4-6
- POP/FLE Teacher's Resource Book
- POP/FLE Pupil's Book grades 7-9 and;
- Teacher's Training Manual

The above materials will be reviewed at a Writer's Workshop in order for it to be introduced into the Madrasah institutions by September 2001.

The project is contributing to the Population and Development Strategy Sub-Programme outputs through building capacities at school levels by enabling youths to acquire knowledge and attitude on morality, reproductive health and sexual health education thus contributing to reproductive health and family planning activities of the Population programme.

The training offered to teachers does not only equip them with skills to adequately teach the subject but also to improve the overall quality of the education sector.

The gender project under this sub-programme has provided scholarships to sixteen girls doing science. This is to bridge the gender gap in this area.

The data surveillance committee has been revitalized to coordinate data collection, analysis and dissemination in order to ensure the reliability of data and harmonize data findings.

### ADVOCACY

The advocacy sub-programme is executed by the Department of State for Information and Broadcasting. There are four outputs intended to contribute to the goals of the Country Programme (CP) and they are as follows:

- An enabling environment created for the review and reform of laws and measures for the attainment of the National Policy Objectives;
- A National IEC/Advocacy Strategy adopted and the institutional base IEC and Advocacy co-ordination strengthened;
- The creation of a conducive environment for the promotion of the status of Youths and access to Adolescent RH services and
- An enabling environment for the resource mobilization in support of the population programme created.

Advocacy, being an important tool in behavioural change, government and UNFPA set-up various networks such as the Network of Parliamentarians, Religious Leaders, Traditional Communicators, Youths and Journalists to carry out activities such as the inventory of laws and measures that hinder the implementation of the population Policy, enlisting of Parliamentarians/National Assembly members to support law reform commission and Cabinet for the review of unfavorable laws that hinder the implementation of the National Population Policy, training of message development workshops for traditional communicators, publication of newsletters and the sensitization of religious leaders. In the case of the Network of Parliamentarians, a one-day sensitization on Population and Development issues was conducted during the launching of the Network and it is yet to develop an action programme. The problem has been that the Secretary General of the Network seems to be the only active member and other members are not being consulted or involved in anything.

The activities identified in the project work-plan to address the output, to revise and adopt the IEC/Advocacy Strategy, could not be achieved because under the World Bank funded Participatory Health, Population and Nutrition Project (PHPNP), funds were also allocated to formulate an IEC Strategy. In the spirit of collaboration, co-ordination and streamlining of the use of resources, UNFPA initiated discussions in having the two programmes jointly fund the review of existing IEC/Advocacy strategy under the UNFPA funded project, with a view to developing one strategy that would serve the interest of both projects.

Series of meetings have been held to discuss the issue and to strategize on the modalities of implementation, but what is evident is the slowness in implementation due to the fact that organizational interest rather than the country's interest are more pronounced. The Department of State for Health should take the lead role especially the Department of Health in order to have one common strategy if messages are to be harmonized for the eventual benefit of the population.

#### STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY

This is an on-going exercise. UNFPA has provided series of long-term and short-term training in Population and Development. Locally, in-service and in-country training has been provided for service providers, population taskforce and traditional communicators in order to increase the multiple effect.

The strengthening of national capacity to incorporate gender concerns into national/divisional plans, is an ongoing exercise. During the reconstitution of the Population Task forces, there was training on gender and development and there is adequate representation of both sexes in the Population Task Forces.

The absence of appropriate methodological tools for effective integration of gender concerns in national/divisional planning process, continues to be a challenge. Nevertheless the continuous sensitization of gender and development issues at national/divisional/municipal levels, hopefully will create the enabling environment to foster this integration.

Project Managers and Directors were trained in log-frame formulation/design and implementation of programmes, with assistance from the Country Support Team (CST) in Dakar, Senegal. The local office did training on the modalities of National Execution (NEX) for project Accountants and Managers to improve the efficiency of project management. This will be further intensified in the coming year to ensure that managers and accountants are conversant with NEX modalities.

Project Managers have undergone computer training locally. Office equipment such as computers, data processing equipment, have been provided to improve and increase productivity in programme delivery.

#### BUILDING AND USING KNOWLEDGE BASE

Some initiatives have been embarked upon, such as the Adolescent Survey Report that has just been finalized and which will assist the country map-out an explicit programme addressing Adolescent Health needs.

The Population Data Bank published by the Population Secretariat although delayed could serve as a useful tool in providing indicators for the population programme. The reactivated Data Surveillance Committee on Health and Education supplements information, which will help harmonize and improve utilization of research findings.

The Population Secretariat, MCH/FP Unit and The Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) participated in a workshop on Reproductive Health Research in Dakar, Senegal this goes a long way to improve sub-regional co-operation.

#### PROMOTING, STRENGTHENING & CO-ORDINATING PARTNERSHIPS

UNFPA has collaborated with other development partners, NGOs, religious institutions and Civil Society in addressing population issues. The setting-up of various networks and empowering them through participation in formulation, implementation and evaluation. It has been the practice to involve stakeholders in Programme Planning where priorities are set and agreed jointly with implementers.

UNFPA has participated in programme planning and review together with UNDP, UNICEF and collaborating NGOs such as the Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) and the Gambian-German Family Planning Programme (GGFPP), to share information and to map-out areas of over-lap, in order to improve co-ordination. There has been constant dialogue and information sharing with the World Bank one of the major donors in Health.

The Gambia Network of National Assembly and the Network of Parliamentarians in Dakar/Senegal has had exchange visits.

The UNFPA local office is a member of a Gender focal point network set-up by the DFID project on Mainstreaming Gender. The UN Thematic Group on Gender although dormant, will also serve as a venue to discuss a common strategy in dealing with Gender issues.

Through the Thematic Group of the Social Sector, World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, the Government of The Gambia and Medical Research Council (MRC), have developed the PRSP Project. This group also co-ordinates HIV/AIDS activities under the sub-theme and UNAIDS Chaired by WHO.

## MANAGING FOR RESULTS

### Programme Management

In April, both the local staff and the national counterparts were trained in log frame following a recommendation by the mid-term review of 1999, that the major constraints in the delay in formulating the present Country Programme (CP), was that national counterparts did not receive training in log frame prior to the formulation of the Country Programme.

The MYFF is not in full use. The Gambia's main constraint is obtaining reliable data. Most indicators used in both the CP and MYFF are data from 1990 and 1993 surveys, which makes evaluation of the programme difficult. There was plan to conduct a DHS survey under the present Country Programme but due to financial constraints, this could not be achieved. However, efforts should be made to have intercensural surveys to address the data gaps.

The basic responsibility of the UNFPA Office has been constant monitoring of programme activities. The office had participated in project site visits, attended seminars/workshops to verify the effectiveness of such seminars and has given

feedback to programme management, where improvement is necessary. However, Government execution modality has shown its limits in effectiveness, results, achievements and lack of co-ordination.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

### Resource Mobilization:

Resource mobilization plan for 2000 has been discussed with the World Bank, and the European Union (EU) and UNFPA in obtaining assistance during the next Population and Housing Census slated for 2003. A project proposal for funding has been formulated. A mini in-country donor's meeting is scheduled for 2001 followed by an external donor's conference. The limiting factor for in-country resource mobilization has been the non-resident of major donors. No multi-bi projects have been identified this year.

The office participated in the monthly Project Directors and Managers' meeting where information on policy guidelines are shared, projects share information, experiences, constraints and problems resolved.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The office serves as repository of Population information. Information received from Headquarters and other institutions is shared with project Managers, Directors, Schools and other institutions.

The planning workshops at the beginning of the year are used to inform project Directors and Managers on the new guidelines/thrust of UNFPA. The office has also set up a documentation center that is updated periodically.

## HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The office work plan was developed through a team approach not only limited to the local office but also sharing it with the Dakar Office during the retreat of the two Offices held in Senegal.

Individual Performance Plans (IPP) and Performance Appraisal Review (PAR) are discussed with staff and supervisors.

There has been staff meetings in which the operations of the office were discussed, constraints identified and solutions reached, have served useful.

Staff are encouraged to participate in seminars/briefings to expose them to the holistic nature of the programme and also in order to enrich their knowledge base.

Self-learning and on-the-job training and coaching is ongoing. The Assistant Representative and Secretary are enrolled in French classes at Alliance Franco-Gambienne. The Finance/Administrative Assistant attended a training course in WinPRMS WinUNIFOS in Accra, Ghana. He is expected to train the Assistant Representative and the Secretary on these concepts.

## SUPPORT FROM OTHER OFFICES OF THE ORGANISATION

Technical support from the Country Support Team (CST) in Dakar has been a bit difficult due to competitive demands on the CST. The Gambia was able to benefit from one multi-disciplinary mission, which was training on log frame. The focal point for Gambia visited the Gambia twice this year. Feedback was received from the 2003 Census Project Proposal.

Constant support and timely feedback was received from Headquarters. Information sharing has been regular. Programme Planning and implementation guidelines, circulars and manual have been very useful although some of the guidelines are received late at the field. Time should be given to digest/internalize these guidelines prior to its implementation, specifically the MYFF.

## UN REFORMS

UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP and UNV moved to a common premises in March/April 2000. This move has improved communication within these agencies.

UNFPA has been an active member in the UNDAF process, UN House Committee and participates in three out of the four UN Thematic groups namely:

- Thematic Group on the Social Sector
- Thematic Group on Economic Management and Governance and
- Gender Thematic Group.

UNFPA chairs the Thematic Group on Social Sector and is a member of the UNAIDS sub-theme group.

The thematic group on Economic Management and Governance was responsible for the coordination of the United Nations Development Assistance framework (UNDAF) exercise. A consultant was engaged to facilitate the preparation and production of the UNDAF report in collaboration with this group. The production of the document was done through a participatory process involving the UN Country team, Government and NGOs. A two-day workshop to finalize the document was held with the participation of various Government institutions and NGOs.

Donor coordination has been strengthened. The UNAIDS Thematic Group conducted the African Youth Forum on Aids in Addis Ababa. This sub-group has been very active.

## ISSUES OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ADVOCACY

### Programme Advocacy

The objective of the Advocacy sub-programme is to increase awareness on population and development issues, including gender equality and equity, also to increase political commitment and support to the National Population Policy and Plan as well as to bring about positive changes in behaviour and attitude towards RH/SH/FP, harmful traditional practices, girls' education, participation of women in decision making and violence against women.

To achieve the above, UNFPA works with the various Networks set-up in the population programme, through sensitization programmes, workshops and seminars.

The Gambia being a predominantly Muslim country and with population issues being sensitive, UNFPA works with religious institutions through annual conferences on topical issues such as, Islam and the Girl child, Islam and family well-being focusing on FGM.

The annual World Population Day celebrations, launching of State of the World Population Report, Poster and Quiz competitions, are used to advocate UNFPA's mandate/policy.

### Planned Results and Targets for 2001

Under the Reproductive Health/Sexual Health and Family Planning Sub-Programme, the Department of State for Health conducted a Survey on Adolescent/Youth Reproductive & Sexual Health issues, with a view to identifying problems for which appropriate interventions addressing Adolescent/Youth needs could be developed.

Under the same Sub-Programme, the evaluation of the MCH/FP Programme that started in 1978 is on going. The results will assist the Department of State for Health to design an appropriate Reproductive Health Policy and eventually the emphasis from MCH/FP to Reproductive Health Services, which is more encompassing.

At the Office Level the focus will be in the following key areas:

- Strengthen the implementation of the Cairo Plan of Action;
- Improve the management of the programme;

- Strengthen programme execution;
- Strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of the office;
- Improve the administrative and financial management of the office;
- Strengthen sensitization activities on Population issues.

The strengthening of the implementation of the Cairo Plan of Action, will involve looking at the changing socio-cultural environment, by advocating for male participation in Reproductive Health programmes and activities, conduct a training workshop for the private sector on the ICPD Plan of Action with a view to soliciting their participation in funding Reproductive Health Services; a training workshop on advocating for dialogue between parents and teachers; advocating against FGM, early marriage, teenage pregnancies using NGOs and religious leaders.

The operationalisation of RH will be strengthened, by conducting quarterly meetings of collaborating agencies in Adolescent Reproductive Health issues and assisting the Department of State for Health in implementing the findings of the recent Adolescent Health Survey and the evaluation of the MCH/FP.

Project Managers, Directors, Managers and Accountants will be further trained on the concept on national execution jointly with UNDP. There has been a serious delay in programme implementation due to the lack of capacity and commitment on the government side to follow the modalities of national execution. UNFPA should assist in building capacity in this area and also an interim measure to disburse funds under direct disbursements should be sought. The present arrangement of depositing funds into the project below the line account in the government treasury makes it difficult to monitor expenditures and also most of the time these requests for advances are not filled properly and the local office is obliged to help project to fill them. This does create demand on the time of the already thinly staffed office.

The improvement of the Management of the office will be achieved through better planning of activities, strengthening of programme execution/implementation both financial and administratively. Opportunities will be awarded to staff to attend training in management and greater emphasis on the job training will be

Sensitization on population issues will be in the form of celebrating World Population Day; launching the State of World Population Report; Organizing Poster Contest, Quiz Competition in Senior Secondary Schools and Press Conferences, training in Gender for project staff; Meeting NOGs working in the area of FGM at grassroots level.