



NEWS FLASH

UNFPA REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EAST & SOUTHERN AFRICA:

FIRST VISIT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

06 - 15 MARCH 2024

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**WALKING THE TALK,
TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE 3RD ZERO:
ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**



“Our hope is that in Madagascar for the next six years, we can accelerate progress by exploring ways multi-faceted approaches in working jointly.”

Lydia Zigomo, Regional Director, UNFPA East and Southern Africa



Field visit in Toamasina, Madagascar with UN Resident coordinator, Minister of Population and solidarity, Ambassadors of Japan, Korea & UK, Representatives from US embassy, Orange Solidarité, Fondation BOA, Airtel and the UN Country team.

DELIVERING AS ONE TO SUSTAINABLY EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE, WOMEN AND GIRLS AND FREE THEM FROM ALL VIOLENCE

Madagascar is among the African countries where the Spotlight Initiative, the global partnership to eliminate violence against women and girls, led globally by the United Nations in partnership with the European Union and other partners, is currently being developed. This initiative involves all United Nations (UN) agencies through the Gender thematic group under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator in Madagascar. It emphasizes a holistic approach, taking into account four mutually reinforcing programming pillars: (1) laws, policies, and institutions, (2) prevention, (3) response, and (4) support for local civil societies and women's movements.

During her visit, UNFPA's Regional Director, together with the UN Resident Coordinator in Madagascar, led a team of key stakeholders to the field, to make an appraisal of the ongoing projects on the fields of (1) fight against Gender Based Violence, (2) Youth empowerment, (3) Sexual and reproductive health and rights, conducted by UN agencies and their partners.

The team made up of the UN country team, Government, diplomatic corps and donors, private sector and civil society visited four sites. These include : Freedom from Fistula, Centre Vonjy, Integrated GBV Care center (CPCI) and Youth center for youth activities.

During the visit, **Partners speak with one voice:**

“Dependance is an open door to violence.” Mrs Christine JAULMES, UNICEF Madagascar Representative

“A girl who stays at school is more likely to find a better job that will ensure her economic autonomy, she could decide for herself, for her own body and will not depend on her partner.” Mrs Lydia Zigomo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa

“We should start empowering youth, women and girls from the earliest age to prevent and eliminate violence and accompany them during their life cycle.”
Issa Sanogo, UN Madagascar Resident Coordinator



Olga, Obstetric fistula survivor restored thanks to Freedom From Fistula in Toamasina, Madagascar

M. Carl Dickens, Director of Freedom From Fistula, explaining how fistula victims are cared for from the moment they arrive at the center until they undergo surgery and recover completely. In the presence of UNFPA RD, Orange Solidarité, Fondation BOA and UNFPA staff.

Fistula in Madagascar

Fistula is an abnormal communication between the vagina and the bladder and/or rectum occurring after a laborious delivery. It is a severe form of maternal morbidity and a real public health issue, as well as a human scourge due to the social stigma suffered by the women and girls concerned. It is estimated that in Madagascar, there are 5 cases of fistula per 1,000 women who have given birth, and an estimated prevalence of 50,000 women living with fistula.

FROM DARKNESS TO DIGNITY, the 2 Ds of Obstetric fistula with Freedom From Fistula

Currently, Madagascar can repair an average of 1,000 women suffering from fistula a year. Since 2010, 11,676 women and girls have benefited from surgery enabling them to radically change their standard of living and offer them a future free from social stigma.

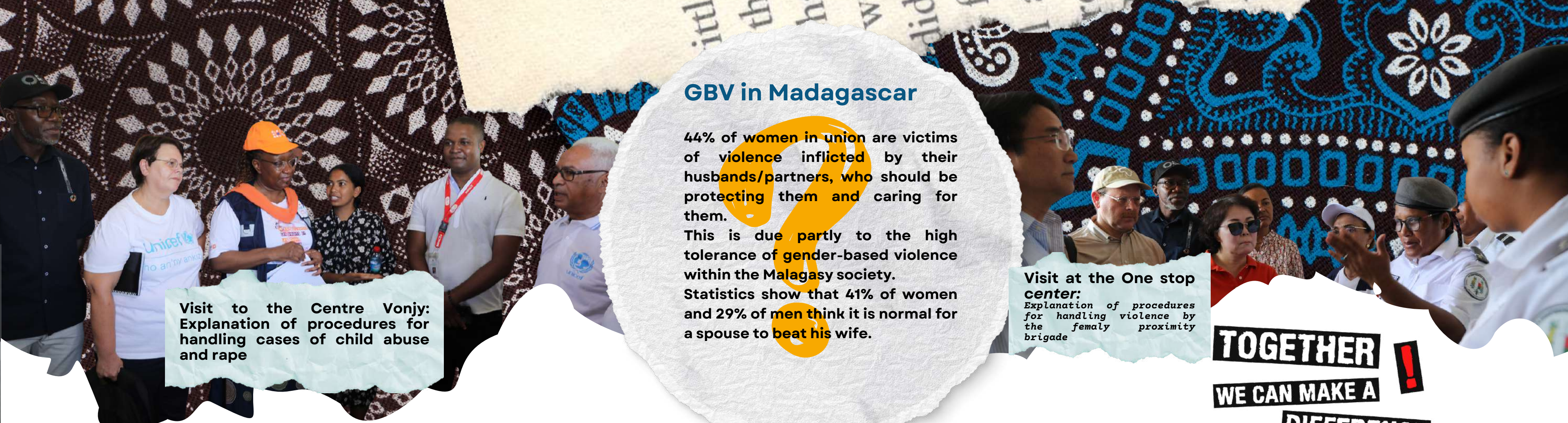
With such a rhythm, we should wait 50 years before Obstetric Fistula can be eliminated. In the meantime, more than 4,000 women a year will be isolated and will live through social stigma.

TOGETHER 
WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

UN agencies and partners such as the embassies of the United Kingdom, Korea, Japan and the United States, Freedom from Fistula, Orange Solidarité, Airtel and BOA Fondation agreed that restoring women's dignity, empowering them with better support for reintegration into the community is a matter of collective urgency.

Pictures of the visit available here





Visit to the Centre Vonjy: Explanation of procedures for handling cases of child abuse and rape

GBV in Madagascar

44% of women in union are victims of violence inflicted by their husbands/partners, who should be protecting them and caring for them.

This is due partly to the high tolerance of gender-based violence within the Malagasy society.

Statistics show that 41% of women and 29% of men think it is normal for a spouse to beat his wife.

Visit at the One stop center: Explanation of procedures for handling violence by the femaly proximity brigade

TOGETHER **WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

ELIMINATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE - MADAGASCAR ONE STOP CENTER UNIQUE MODEL

The Centre Vonjy is an integrated center offering a package of medical, psychosocial and legal services for girls and boys under the age of 18 who are victims of sexual violence. The Centre Vonjy in Toamasina is one of 06 Centres Vonjy in Madagascar.

Meanwhile, the integrated center (CPCI) is also offering a package of medical, psychosocial and legal services specifically for victims of GBV in partnership with the Ministry of Population and Solidarity, Ministry of Public Health, Female Proximity Brigade. 26 care centers in 09 regions are supported.

During 2023, **425 cases** of gender-based violence were treated at the center, including:

- 217 cases of economic violence,
- 151 cases of moral violence,
- 51 cases of physical violence,
- 6 cases of sexual violence.

712 children (including girls and boys) are victims of sexual violence supported at the Centre Vonjy Toamasina from September 2016 to December 2023:

- 66% aged 5-14 years,
- 25% aged 15-18
- and 09% aged 0-4 years

We believe that it is vital to implement effective strategies to support survivors, to eliminate harmful practices and to empower women and girls. This can start with the institutionalization of the Centre Vonjy within the CHUA and with an unique referral system mechanism in all regions of Madagacar.

Pictures of the visit available here





Conversation with young people in Toamasina



Message from the RD to young people at the Youth Leadership Bootcamp in Antananarivo



“ Madagascar is a young country, just like Africa. You, young people, as the majority are making a difference. You have demonstrated today that disability is not incapacity. You have the solutions to address all the problems facing young people and the African continent in your hands. Get up, stand up for your rights. ”

Lydia Zigomo,
UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa

CHECKPOINT WITH YOUTH IN TAMATAVE

Investing in young people is the best way to leave a sustainable legacy free from violence.

Ensuring they can access to their rights, to their choices and can make informed decisions for their life, their body, their future no matter their situation is our duty.

Political and social advocacies need to be done for a bigger investment in this human capital and for a safe world of opportunities for young people.

With development partners, we hear their call to action to collectively intervene in reproductive health, employability, peace-building and youth participation in an inclusive way.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP BOOTCAMP IN TANA

Young people understand their strategic roles in achieving transformative results in Madagascar.

During the Youth Leadership Bootcamp co-organized by UNFPA, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Afriyan Madagascar, young people unveiled their commitment to advancing progress on sexual and reproductive health, family planning and fighting against gender-based violence.

“ We, people living with disabilities, are just like others, we have the right to #FamilyPlanning. Today, I plead for the accessibility of Reproductive Health infrastructures and services to people with disabilities”,

Veronirina Sylvie



“ My name is Mahery, I'm a young peer educator in the Haute Matsiatra region, where young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services is relatively limited. I raise awareness in communities to break down myths about sexuality and inform young people about their rights and the benefits of family planning for them. ”



Pictures of the visit available here





Strengthening partnership & advocacy

*Ensuring rights and choices for
all*

With the Resident
Coordinators of the United
Nations in the Indian Ocean



MEETING WITH UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR FOR MADAGASCAR

Speaking with One Voice to ensure the rights and choices for all.

Mrs Lydia Zigomo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, and M. Issa Sanogo, UN Madagascar Resident Coordinator, reaffirm their commitment to strengthening collaboration to accelerate the achievement of the SDG 3 and the SDG 5 during these last years of the Decade of Actions to contribute the SDG agenda for Madagascar.

Pictures of the visit
available here



MEETING WITH UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR FOR MAURITIUS & SEYCHELLES, AND HER TEAM.

For the UNFPA's Regional Director first mission to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the focus was made on how UN agencies can take advantage of their synergy to innovate and deliver more impactful results to better position the UN as an institution, which makes the difference.

Engaging discussions focused on gender-based violence agenda, sexual and reproductive health and demographics.

Pictures of the visit
available here





UN Resident Coordinator, M. Issa Sanogo, speaking during the celebration of the International Women's Day in Toamasina

First Lady of Madagascar, Champion for the fight against GBV, Mrs Mialy Rajoelina, speaking during the celebration of the International Women's Day in Toamasina

His Excellency President of the Republic of Madagascar, M. Andry Rajoelina, speaking during the celebration of the International Women's Day in Toamasina

“INVEST IN WOMEN: ACCELERATE PROGRESS, INSPIRE INCLUSION”- 8TH OF MARCH IN TOAMASINA, MADAGASCAR

The celebration of International Women's Rights Day was marked by the theme: "Invest in women: Accelerate progress."

In support of the government's initiatives, UN agencies joined the national celebration ceremony. At the ceremony, the Presidential Couple, who are respectively the champion of the fight against GBV and the champion of family planning delivered strong messages for gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices.

No development is possible unless women's rights, health and well-being are at the heart of our priorities. We recognize the support of the Malagasy government's partners in this noble cause. However, efforts are still needed to move towards gender equality.



M. Issa Sanogo
UN Madagascar Resident Coordinator

Efforts have been undertaken by the government to give priority to women in politics and leadership positions, and to empower them. Today, I reiterate our support for Malagasy women and women's associations, so that they can become independent and actively contribute to the development of the country.



HE M. Andry Rajoelina,
President of the Republic of Madagascar
Family Planning Champion

I urge all parents to support their daughters in finishing their studies so that they can achieve their dreams. Let's stop making them drop out of school. It's our duty as parents to educate our sons to respect women.



Mrs Mialy Rajoelina
First Lady of the Republic of Madagascar
UNFPA Champion of the fight against GBV

Pictures of the celebration ceremony available here





Advocacy engagement with donors, CSO, Private sector and UN head of agencies in the framework of the Spotlight Initiative 2.0

Discussion with Madagascar's Minister of Foreign Affairs on UNFPA's support through the alignment of its programme with the Government priorities

Discussion with Madagascar's Minister of Public Health on UNFPA's support to the Government priorities to ensure access to Reproductive Health

Discussion with Madagascar's Minister of Population and Solidarity on UNFPA's support to the Government priorities on gender issues and on women empowerment

CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE FIRST LADY OF MADAGASCAR

Strengthening the advocacy for the elimination of all forms of Gender-Based Violence: the visit of the GBV One stop center run by the First Lady of Madagascar was an opportunity to assess the synergy between all GBV actors and the gaps.

Operational since 2020, the center has been able to support **more than 10,000 cases of gender-based violence.**



Discussion with Female Proximity Brigade (A police unit composed solely of women)

ENGAGEMENT WITH DONORS, MEETING WITH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND MINISTER OF POPULATION IN MADAGASCAR - A NEW ERA OF PARTNERSHIP

This visit in Madagascar reiterates UNFPA's support through the alignment of its programme with the Government's priorities on human capital. This year will offer several milestones for women, girls and young people's access to their rights and **equal opportunities.** This committed partnership will focus on **innovation** and South-South cooperation to raise voices on **girls' rights, education and health.**

Family Planning is one of Madagascar's government main priorities to develop the human capital. UNFPA stands ready to support Madagascar's efforts. In parallel, joint accomplishments can be celebrated in terms of proximity care, that include drone deliveries, mobile clinics to ensure **access to reproductive health and rights for the most underserved population.** Nevertheless a lot needs to be done and UNFPA acknowledges the ministries' effort.

Pictures of the visit available here



HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUES ON ACCELERATING THE PROGRESS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

«L'éducation sexuelle en milieu scolaire est importante»

La visite officielle à Madagascar de la directrice régionale de l'UNFPA pour l'Afrique Australe et Orientale, Lydia Zigomo, a pris fin hier à cette occasion des reconnaissances et aux différents acteurs de la lutte contre les violences sexuelles et sexuelles (VBS), qui prend encore plus d'importance dans le pays.

Le haut responsable de l'UNFPA pour l'Afrique Australe et Orientale, Lydia Zigomo, a remis à la Première Dame de Madagascar, Mme Ralandy Ralandy, un trophée en reconnaissance de son engagement exceptionnel dans la lutte contre les violences sexuelles et sexuelles (VBS). L'éducation sexuelle en milieu scolaire est une approche pertinente pour protéger les enfants et adolescents et assurer leur avenir et leur bien-être. L'éducation sexuelle est une fois qu'elle est intégrée dans les programmes scolaires et universitaires, elle contribue à la promotion de la santé sexuelle et reproductrice, à la prévention des infections sexuellement transmissibles, à la réduction du risque de grossesse précoce et à la promotion de l'égalité de genre. La représentation de l'UNFPA à Madagascar est assurée par la représentante régionale, Lydia Zigomo.

L'éducation et la scolarisation des filles : un passage obligé

« Garder les filles dans l'école est vraiment la meilleure manière de les protéger et de réduire leur vulnérabilité ». C'est ce qui a été avancé lors d'une conférence organisée par l'UNFPA ou organisme onusien en charge de la région en marge de la visite officielle de son directeur régional pour l'Afrique Australe et Orientale. La nécessité de mettre en œuvre des interventions ciblées envers les filles a été soulignée. Ces interventions comprennent l'amélioration des infrastructures scolaires, le développement de programmes scolaires adaptés au lieu scolaire. L'idée serait ainsi d'offrir un environnement scolaire caractéristique, sûr et accueillant dans le cadre de cette logique. « Maintenir les filles le plus longtemps possible dans l'école est une stratégie dont nous devons nous appuyer pour lutter contre le mariage des enfants, le mariage précoce », a-t-on expliqué. La lutte contre le mariage précoce est une priorité pour le pays qui constituerait également une mesure clé pour la promotion de l'égalité de genre et la scolarisation des filles. Les interventions doivent être adaptées aux besoins des filles et des garçons. La scolarisation des filles est une priorité pour le pays.

Presentation of the recognition trophy to the First Lady of Madagascar for her exceptional contribution in mobilizing resources and strengthening the legal framework to break the silence around GBV

STRONG COMMITMENT FROM UNFPA CHAMPION FOR THE FIGHT AGAINST GBV IN MADAGASCAR

#GenderEquality can no longer wait. UNFPA joins the call to action launched by Madagascar's First Lady, UNFPA Champion for the fight against GBV, for a bolder investment in women and girls to accelerate the elimination of GBV, early marriage, incest and to make this ambition of gender equality a reality.

The First Lady was rewarded in recognition of her contribution in mobilizing resources and strengthening the legal framework that has enabled Malagasy women and girls to break the silence around violence and regain their dignity.

Best practices on the acceleration of gender equality was shared by the Seychelles, Comoros, Mauritius and Madagascar.

Pictures of the high level dialogue available here



“ Ladies and Gentlemen, we have unfinished business and we must work together with urgency, investing in women and seizing every opportunity to achieve the inclusive, equitable and sustainable vision of the ICPD. ”

Lydia Zigomo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa



Women participating to the high level panels on "women invest in yourselves & accelerate progress" including Minister of Youth sports and Family, Minister of Investment, Entrepreneurship and Industry, Seychelles

WOMEN EMPOWERING WOMEN IN SEYCHELLES

UNFPA in Seychelles, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Family, hosted a High-Level Forum celebrating International Women's Day 2024 on 14th March in Mahe. The Forum aimed to explore ways to invest in women, as per the IWD 2024 theme, and placed entrepreneurship as a vehicle for transformational change to address sustainable development issues. The High-level Forum saw the participation of the First Lady of the Republic of Seychelles and of female Ministers in the Seychelles. It was an opportunity to celebrate the women and girls who are championing the advancement of entrepreneurship and to promote women's access to various financing opportunities including start-up and growth of Small and Medium Enterprises. As well, UNFPA brought in the specific perspective of investing in women's health to ensure sustainable growth.

Throughout the day, different panels and roundtables were organized with honorary and guest speakers to comprehensively discuss the challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment and wellbeing in Seychelles.

“ Let us be bold, audacious, unapologetic. We wait so long for someone else to celebrate us, let us celebrate ourselves ”

Mrs Marie-Céline Zialor, Minister of Youth Sports and Family, Seychelles

“ We live and survive hardships. Be bold, be different, make a priority to stand up for yourselves. ”

Mrs Devika Vidot, Minister of Investment, Entrepreneurship and Industry, Seychelles

HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUES ON ACCELERATING THE PROGRESS FOR GENDER EQUALITY



High-level Panel discussion to invest in Women and health

Mrs. Marie-Celine Zialor, Minister of Youth, Sports and Family gave a strong opening speech in which she brought up the importance of self-care, and the need for women to unapologetically invest in themselves.

UNFPA RD, Lydia Zigomo, congratulated Seychelles on achieving gender parity in education in Seychelles, as well as their impressive progress in reaching almost 0 in 2 of the 3 UNFPA's transformative results. Despite these strongly positive numbers, RD Zigomo highlighted that gender inequalities and harmful gender norms still significantly contribute to the inability of women and girls to claim their right to bodily autonomy in Seychelles and encouraged Seychelles to continue their efforts to addressing the structural barriers which threaten the health, safety, dignity and life aspirations of adolescent girls and young women.

It was a most inspiring forum, filled with testimonies from remarkable women in Seychelles, who in spite of hard challenges and obstacles, pushed on and in their own way, made their success.

Pictures of the high level dialogue available here



MINISTERIAL LUNCH

UNFPA hosted a Ministerial Lunch in Seychelles to build momentum around the ICPD30 agenda. RD congratulated Seychelles on the good progress made and commended the efforts of Seychelles to put people at the core of its development. RD had dedicated dialogues on a number of issues, thus increasing understanding of ICPD-related issues and expanding the community of allies, beyond the usual UNFPA implementing partners.

It was also an opportunity for UNFPA to gain a first-hand high-level perspective on the needs of Seychelles in terms of SIDS priorities and better understand the role UNFPA can play in supporting and advancing social and human capital issues in the country.



MOU signed by Mrs Marie-Céline Zialor, Minister of Youth, Sports and Family in Seychelles and Mrs Josiane Yaguibou, UNFPA Country Director for Seychelles

NEW DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND FAMILY

The newly signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNFPA and the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Family in Seychelles marks a significant milestone in advancing population issues, women's empowerment, and the well-being of young people. This partnership aligns with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda and underscores UNFPA's commitment to supporting Seychelles in achieving its development goals, within the framework of the UNSDCF 2024-2028 in Seychelles.

The MoU provides a framework for collaboration on various initiatives aimed at improving, promoting gender equality, and addressing gender-based violence, as well as ensuring youth fulfill their full potential. By working together, UNFPA and the Ministry can leverage their expertise and resources to create a more enabling environment for women, young people and the elderly to thrive. This partnership is a testament to the shared commitment of UNFPA and the Government of Seychelles to building a more equitable and sustainable future for all.



UNFPA STAFF
conversation with the RD

for the rights and choices for all



Mrs Lydia Zigomo with UNFPA Madagascar's staff

UNFPA STAFF CONVERSATION WITH THE RD

“As UNFPA (United Nations) staff, it is a privilege to serve our country, to serve others in all humility and in all circumstances” RD Lydia ZIGOMO, during meeting with UNFPA in Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles staff.

One of the highlights of RD Lydia’s visit to the Indian Ocean was an open conversation she had with UNFPA staff. Underscoring the important work of the United Nations as a whole and of UNFPA in particular, she said **“we are about making a difference”** and that is why colleagues need not relent in learning and upskilling everyday so they can better contribute to a better world, one where the rights and choices of all are guaranteed. **“Please don’t stop growing and improving everyday, so we can be Fit For Purpose”** she appealed.

She also called on UNFPA staff in the Indian Ocean to seek to better understand UNFPA’s relationship and comparative advantage in the region to better unlock doors of opportunities. Referring to the teens and adolescents in Madagascar, who make up 65 percent of the population, Ms Lydia said although the habitual social norms are such that society continues to make choices for young people and they are not seen as people who have rights and rights to their choices, if the tides were turned, then “we’ll see a group of young people growing up and taking better control of their lives.” The weather specificity of the Indian ocean as a whole and trends on climate change as well as their links to UNFPA’s mandate are issues she also noted.

During the two-hour interactive session, RD Lydia equally delved into the importance of staff welfare for better productivity. “You are not irreplaceable”, she said, noting that while there are seasons of high pressure within the context of delivering on UNFPA’s mandate, staff also have to take time off to decompress and explore hobbies. “Have a balanced life”, in her words, find the right to balance responsibilities across the personal and professional life. Using her life and experience as an example, she encouraged the team to make the best out of working with the UN and disclosed that the regional office is looking into optimizing learning opportunities for staff.



Pictures of the meeting available here





Ensuring rights and choices for all

