



# Highlights

2020



2020 Highlights of activities for UNFPA  
Liaison Office to the African Union and  
ECA

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United Nations Population Fund Liaison Office to the  
African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNFPAELO)

Contact:  
United Nations Population Fund Liaison Office to the  
African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNFPAELO)  
Menelik II Avenue  
Addis Ababa Ethiopia  
Tel: +251115444064

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## SUMMARY

This Newsletter covers highlights for the year 2020 by the UNFPA Liaison Office to the AU and ECA.

Following the historic Nairobi Summit that was held in 2019 to commemorate ICPD25, UNFPA began the year 2020 with a renewed commitment to deliver on our promises to women and girls toward meeting three zeros by 2030, the same deadline for accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation. However, a few months into the year, the world faced an unprecedented crisis like no other before, the COVID-19 pandemic hit globally. The pandemic exacerbated already existing inequalities of vulnerable populations including women and girls, a threatening to roll back hard-earned gains on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. In light of this ongoing COVID-19 crisis, UNFPA's Liaison Office to the AU and ECA resorted to hosting most its planned high-level events online in a move to assist ongoing efforts to curb the spread of the virus. The Liaison Office also continued to actively engage stakeholders such as young people, governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, academia and international development partners in crafting policies and programs that ensured that women and girls are not left behind in the Decade of Action. The events that took place can be accessed on our social media platforms on YouTube, twitter and Facebook.

All our event videos can be accessed [HERE](#)

## UNFPA participation during the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government.

The year 2020 started off with the 33rd Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 09-10 February 2020 under the theme "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development". UNFPA was among the key partners that attended and engaged with various African Union Member States, Government Officials and Heads of State. UNFPA's high level delegation to this event comprised of the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem; UNFPA Arab States Regional Director, Dr. Luay Shabaneh; UNFPA Ethiopia Country Representative, Ms. Bettina Maas and former UNFPA-LO Interim Chief Dr. Hala Youssef.



Significant decisions that were made during the Summit included the following. A declaration of the years 2020 to 2030 as the new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion. The African Union also renewed its commitment to end all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) impacting women and girls on the African Continent.

The decisions that were made by the African Union during the summit were welcomed by UNFPA and commended for complementing ongoing efforts to harness the Demographic Dividend in many African

countries. The declarations made, will also accelerate attainment of UNFPA's three transformative goals on zero preventable maternal deaths, zero unmet family planning needs and zero sexual gender-based violence.

More on the decisions can be found [HERE](#)

## UNFPA participation during the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations System convened the 6<sup>th</sup> Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD6), held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe from 24-27 February 2020 under the theme: "2030: A decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063".

The forum was officially opened by President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, H.E Emmerson

Dambudzo Mnangagwa, and brought together over 3000 participants, including ministers, senior government officials, civil society, youth and international development partners across the continent. UNFPA's delegation to the forum was led by the Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo. It comprised of staff from the Liaison Office to the AUC/ECA, East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), the Zimbabwe Country Office as well as the Africa desk in New York. During the meeting UNFPA-

LO in collaboration with UNFPA ASRO, UNFPA ESARO, ECA and the African Union Commission convened a side event on the margins of the conference under the theme "The future is now: African Youth Engagement for the Decade of Action" to address best practices for monitoring of ICPD based SDGs post Nairobi Summit.

More can be found on our quarterly [newsletter](#).

## High-level Continental Dialogue on the State of World Population (SWOP) Report 2020 and Launch.

One of the most significant events that marked 2020 was the High-level Continental Dialogue on the State of World Population (SWOP) 2020 Report and Launch which was convened by UNFPA-Liaison Office to the AU and ECA. The 2020 SWOP Report was titled: Against my will: Defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality. The 2020 continental dialogue and launch event brought together representatives of governments, international development partners, civil society and youth. Opening remarks were delivered by the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA (Programme), Dr. Diene Keita and the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E. Commissioner Amira El Fadil. A special address was delivered by Dr. Morissanda Kouyate, 2020 United Nations Nelson Mandela Prize Laureate and Executive Director of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC).



In her remarks Dr. Keita underscored the importance of inclusion and engagement of men and boys in advocacy efforts to address harmful practices and called on all stakeholders to step up to "Respect, Protect and Fulfill" rights of all women and girls. She concluded by pledging UNFPA's unwavering support to assisting the African Union in realizing all 7 aspirations of Agenda 2063 and added that eliminating harmful practices was at the heart of the quest to build the "Africa We Want".

H.E. Commissioner Amira El Fadil in turn commended UNFPA for its critical role in convening multiple stakeholders at all levels globally, regionally and locally - and facilitating consensus to solve common challenges and threats faced by women and girls in regard to inclusive development and equal rights for all. She further acknowledged the long-standing partnership between the African Union Commission and UNFPA, which is a collaboration of shared commitment to equality, advancement of health, wellbeing and empowerment of women and girls. H.E. Commissioner Amira El Fadil concluded the meeting by officially launching the SWOP 2020 report on behalf of the African Union Commission Chairperson H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat.

More on the Report can be found [HERE](#)

## Virtual briefing with the Pan-African Parliament Women's Caucus on COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) partnered with the Pan-African Parliament through its Women's Caucus to convene a virtual briefing under the theme "COVID-19 and Gender-based violence (GBV): Parliamentary support to gender-responsive national plans". The meeting aimed at providing a platform for various stakeholders to discuss ways of engaging national parliaments in the 55 member states of the African continent, to address gender inequalities and the reported increase in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases due to COVID-19. The virtual briefing also aimed to support and enhance cooperation with the Pan-African Parliament in its oversight role of national parliaments in passing gender-responsive COVID-19 national plans.

The meeting was held on the 10th of September 2020 and attended by over 100 participants from diverse backgrounds via Zoom and YouTube live streaming. The meeting recommended inclusion of women and girls in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for national COVID-19 plans and implementation of gender-responsive legislation at national parliaments level that protects women and girls' rights in building back better post-COVID-19.

More on the Report can be found [HERE](#)

## UNFPA, AUC, UN Women and OHCHR commemoration of 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is an annual international campaign that kicks off on the 25th of November and runs until 10 December, the International Human Rights Day. The commemoration is mainly used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls (VAWG).



In Africa, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant increase in GBV cases has been observed across the Continent. In seminal research, UNFPA projected that an average six (6) months of lockdowns and movement restrictions would potentially lead to 31 million more cases of gender-based violence, 13 million more cases of child marriage, and 2 million cases of female genital mutilation. This crisis

revealed the urgent need for swift action and coordinated efforts to address the scourge of violence against women and girls especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

UNFPA Liaison Office joined the African Union Commission through the Women, Gender and Development Directorate together with UN Women and OHCHR in convening a multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue as part of activities to commemorate 16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The dialogue was attended by experts from Ministries in charge of Gender and Women Affairs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UN agencies, youth representatives, representatives from civil society, and other relevant stakeholders. The Policy Dialogue mobilized commitments by African Union Member States and other stakeholders to accelerate efforts in addressing harmful practices and GBV against women and girls. The meeting also created a platform for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, emerging best practices, remaining challenges, and possible innovative solutions to address GBV in the Continent.

At the conclusion of the Policy Dialogue, the meeting adopted a Call To Action in which every



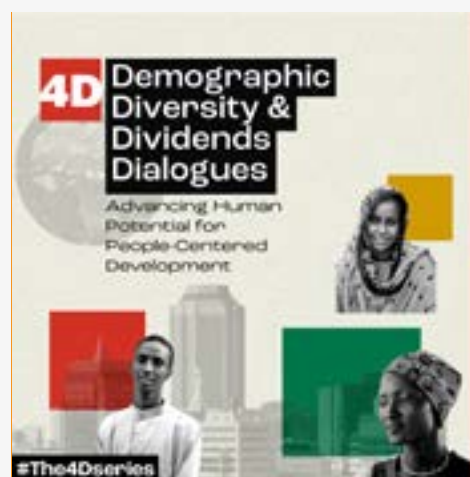
stakeholder present called for actions to address the practical needs of women and girls and their strategic interests within the COVID-19 pandemic and going forward. Stakeholders also agreed on the need for a comprehensive multi-stakeholder coordination, prevention and response mechanism that addresses the physical safety, medical, psychosocial, legal/judicial, economic empowerment as well as the education needs of survivors of gender-based violence, particularly women and girls.

Click [call to action](#) to be redirected to the document.

## **UNFPA, African Union Commission and Government of Germany launch the 4Dseries.**

Building on the commitments from the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 in 2019, UNFPA, the African Union Commission and the Government of Germany joined forces to initiate a series of quarterly Government-Government Policy Dialogues on Demographic Diversity and Dividends, also commonly referred to as the 4Dseries. The dialogues aim to create a learning platform for governments and other key decision-makers on the issue of planning for demographic change, which is critical if countries are to foster human potential and seize the opportunity presented by demographic dividend(s). The dialogues give governments and others a platform for concrete policy dialogues and discussions about successes and challenges when facing demographic change. The high-level launch of the 4Dseries was held on the 5th of October 2020 and was presided over by the AUC Commissioner of Social Affairs, H.E Mrs. Amira El Fadil, the Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Dr. Flachsbarth and UNFPA's Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), Dr. Diene Keita. They were joined by panelists from the Central African Republic, India, Jordan, Mauritania, Moldova, and the Zambia. Nearly 500 viewers tuned in via YouTube and Zoom throughout the event to watch the high-level launch of the initiative.

In her remarks, Dr. Flachsbarth commended UNFPA for continuing to put young people and women at the center of its work even in times of the COVID-19 crisis. She indicated that many countries with large youth populations, mainly in Africa and South Asia, find themselves on the cusp of a demographic dividend. But to be able to benefit from the dividend, governments need to make the right investments in health, quality education and decent employment, and they need to make them now or the window closes. She went on to recognize the African Union as the most significant African regional organization in the Continent working towards driving the continental development agenda. In turn H.E Mrs. Amira El Fadil expressed her gratitude to UNFPA and Government of Germany for



carrying forward the ICPD25 discussions that were held at the Nairobi Summit. She went on to welcome the launch of the 4D series and stated that the dialogues would be instrumental in revealing best practices, challenges and potential solutions to harnessing Demographic Change and the fulfillment of the AU's Agenda 2063. Talking about initiatives to leverage the dividend, H.E Mrs. Amira El Fadil said, "The One Million By 2021 initiative intends to create one million new opportunities for young Africans in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and also for the engagement of young people across the continent and in the diaspora." UNFPA's Deputy Executive Director, Dr. Keita pointed out in her intervention: "For an aging population a second dividend occurs when a large aging generation has experienced a lifetime of economic opportunity and is able to reinvest in the country. Where lifelong health and learning, reliable jobs and social protection allow people to age with dignity they bring a second demographic dividend by

giving back to the next generation as investors, entrepreneurs, mentors, and leaders."

Recordings of the launch are available on the links below:

[Original audio](#)

[English](#)

[French](#)

## **UNFPA Executive Director sends a special message of solidarity and commitment to African Youth in the COVID-19 Response.**

UNFPA participated in a virtual youth webinar that was hosted by the AU Youth Envoy, Ms. Aya Chebbi, under the theme: African and Global Solidarity in COVID-19 Response. The meeting was attended by Former President of the Republic of Malawi, H.E Joyce Banda, Secretary General for COMESA, Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, UN agencies, and youth representatives from across the continent.

UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, sent a video message of solidarity and commitment to African Youth and the African Union Youth Envoy. In her message she commended the leadership of Ms. Chebbi in mobilizing youth and other stakeholders in playing a key role in preventing and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic which threatened to roll back hard-earned gains in inclusive and sustainable development. She also called on young people to combat misinformation on COVID-19 and urged youth to use their skills for creativity and innovation. Dr. Natalia Kanem went on to quote a Ghanaian saying, "One person does not constitute a council" and stated that consultation in the COVID-19 response was very important. She concluded by calling on young people to unite in demanding for accountability on all commitments that were made during the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25.

More on the message click [HERE](#)

## **UNFPA joins forces with AUC and UN agencies to launch the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme.**

UNFPA joined the European Union (EU), African Union Commission and other UN agencies in launching the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme through an inception meeting. The initiative



is a global multi-year partnership between EU and United Nations aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. It is so far the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

The meeting was presided over by the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E. Mrs. Amira Elfadil; Special Representative of the Secretary General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, Ms. Hannah Tetteh;

AU Commission Head of Social Affairs, Dr Jane Ongúlo; Head of the EU Delegation to the AU, H.E. Birgitte Markussen; Mr. Munyaradzi Chenje, Director of UNDCO Regional Office for Africa, and Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa. All the high-level speakers

reiterated their commitment to programme implementation of the Spotlight Initiative in Africa and made a call for the strengthening synergies and vertical coordination to ensure programmatic coherence in addressing all forms of violence against women in Africa.

More on the Report can be found [HERE](#).

## **UNFPA WCARO hosts Regional Steering Committee on Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend in the Sahel (SWEDD).**

Another high-level meeting that took place in 2020 was the Regional Steering Committee on Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend in the Sahel (SWEDD), which was hosted by UNFPA WCARO. The virtual meeting deliberated on COVID-19 response systems and recovery plans centering gender equality and women's empowerment. During this event UNFPA WCARO seized the opportunity to also launch the SWEDD multimedia campaign. UNFPA-LO supported the event through facilitating direct participation of the African Union Commission, which was significant in gathering political pull and partnership for the roll-out of phase 2 of the SWEDD project. This was significant as the AUC welcomed the initiative and also made a commitment to support the rollout of the project.

More on the report click [HERE](#) for English and [HERE](#) for French.

## **UNFPA Launches Geospatial dashboard on Intimate Partner Violence as part of efforts to address GBV and Harmful Practice**

In 2020 UNFPA also launched a new Geospatial dashboard which contains up-to-date, reliable statistics on intimate partner violence for 119 countries, so far the largest collection of country data yet available. The dashboard comes at a time when UNFPA and other stakeholders are intensifying efforts to end all forms of Gender Based Violence and harmful practices, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNFPA-LO Chief, ad interim and Officer-in-charge Ms. Ngonze welcomed the launch of the Geospatial data and stated that the dashboard which also included data from 34 African countries was significant in complementing ongoing continental efforts to address GBV and harmful practices as it provided relevant information on GBV incidences, capturing and providing disaggregated data by age, place of residence, employment, education and household wealth. This information would assist in formulation of tailor-made programs that address the practical needs of women and girls in addressing GBV and harmful practices.

Click [HERE](#) to find out more on the geospatial dashboard.

## Key Upcoming Events Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in 2021

Date	Location	Event
04 February	Virtual Meeting	Commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM.
06-07 February	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.	34 <sup>th</sup> AU Summit running under the theme, " <i>Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for building the Africa We Want</i> "
01-04 March	Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.	7 <sup>th</sup> edition of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development under the theme, " <i>Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.</i> "
15-26 March	UN HQ, New York.	65 <sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 65) under the priority theme, " <i>Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.</i> "
17-23 March	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	53 <sup>rd</sup> Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development under the theme, "Africa's sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of Covid-19."
29-31 March	Mexico	Generation Equality Forums under the theme "Generation Equality: Realizing Women's rights for an equal future."
08-12 June	Paris, France	
19-23 April	UN HQ, New York.	54 <sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) still under last year's theme of "Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development."
06-11 December	Kampala, Uganda.	2021 edition of the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA)

## Publications

Please click on each item to gain access to the publications

1. [High-Level Continental Dialogue on The State of World Population \(SWOP\) Report 2020 and Launch](#)
2. [Virtual briefing with the Pan-African Parliament Women's Caucus COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence](#)
3. [1<sup>ST</sup> Quarterly News Letter](#)
4. [16 Days of Activism](#)





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to the African Union and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa  
(UNFPA/EO)  
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Addis Ababa Ethiopia  
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