



## STATEMENT BY

### ERIKA GOLDSON, UNFPA DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE AT THE KAYAYEI BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP FAIR EMPOWERING KAYAYEI FOR TRANSFORMED LIVES

**DATE:** 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2019

**VENUE:** EFUA SUTHERLAND CHILDREN'S PARK-ACCRA

- Hon. Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection
- Representatives from Government Agencies
- Development Partners, Representatives of the NGO/CSO/FBO Community
- Distinguished Invited Guests
- Young People
- Friends from the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me much pleasure to be part of the maiden Kayayei Business and Leadership Fair. It is indeed gratifying to know that the 'Orange Girls' as we dearly refer to them, are using this platform to highlight their voices and skills as empowered girls through participation in the integrated module for marginalized girls. It is even more gratifying to note that the fair is also creating an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries to engage, dialogue and find sustainable solutions for the challenges that the



Kayayei specifically, and other marginalized girls face in different parts of the country.

For us at UNFPA, we work to ensure that every young person's potential is fulfilled, especially the adolescent girl, in order to guarantee that no one is left behind. Thus, as part of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, the UNFPA Ghana Country Office entered into a partnership with the Purim African Youth Development Platform (PAYDP) to provide Integrated Legal Literacy, Livelihood Skills Training and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights information and services to marginalized girls, particularly the "Kayayei/Paa o Paa" in three regions of Ghana, namely; Greater-Accra (Accra), Ashanti Region (Kumasi) and Bono-East Region (Techiman).

Interactions with these vulnerable girls who work mostly in the urban markets indicate that issues of Child Marriage, abduction and betrothal as well as poverty, are some of the main factors that influence their move to the major markets. In the markets where they live and work, they are exposed to all sorts of abuse and also experience various forms of gender-based violence such as rape with its attendant consequences of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies. While some of these girls become pregnant and are denounced by their partners, others face the risk



of co-habiting against their will, thereby complicating their vulnerability to some of the very practices that they flee from.

The UNFPA Ghana Country Office (CO) has thus been working with these vulnerable girls as a critical cohort to reduce their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, harmful practices and adolescent pregnancies and to also engage them as advocates against such practices, through the partnership with PAYDP. As a means to strengthen programme synergies, UNFPA, under the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme for Empowering Adolescent Girls engaged in further partnership with PAYDP for safe spaces and community systems strengthening interventions to empower and promote adolescent girls' voices, their agency and ability to make informed choices on issues which affect them. These interventions target Kayayei, adolescent mothers and pregnant girls in the Greater Accra, Central, Ashanti and Bono East Regions.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) celebrates 50 years of existence as well as the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its landmark Program of Action that highlighted the importance of sexual and reproductive health, women's empowerment and gender equality in achieving sustainable development. In November, all roads lead to Nairobi to discuss and deliberate on actions to accelerate the promise made 25 years ago in Cairo, to protect the rights of



women and girls worldwide, regardless of race, class, religion or age. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, we work continuously to position the voices of marginalized, out of school girls within the “unfinished business” on ICPD in Ghana.

Ensuring adolescent girls’ wellbeing and improving their lives in measurable and sustainable ways requires broad cross-sector commitment and integrated approaches. Consequently, collaboration and partnership building with state agencies whose mandate relate to girls’ education, health, economic empowerment, prevention and response to gender-based violence has been at the core of the integrated model. These partners are the Ministry of Gender Children and Social protection (MOGCSP), National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), Food Research Institute (FRI), Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana Co-Operative Society, Ghana Health Service (GHS), DOVVSU, Chiefs, Municipal Assemblies, Assembly Members and other CSO’s.

We are thus confident that this fair, with support from all these stakeholders will support our dear girls in having alternatives that will reduce their vulnerability on several fronts while opening up opportunities for new partnerships to create alternative livelihood development pathways for significant transformation in their lives. We therefore encourage you, our



girls, to take full advantage of this event by voicing out your issues to advocate for better opportunities and services.

We expect the Kayayei fair to create an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in dialogue and find sustainable solutions for the challenges that the Kayayei specifically and other marginalized girls face in different parts of the country. We, therefore, call on all the state institutions and partners gathered here, to support interventions aimed at protecting our vulnerable and marginalized girls and improving their access to better services. As a matter of fact, we will like to call on government, through the MoGCSP and the National Youth Authority to adopt this integrated module for work with marginalized adolescent girls for significant transformative impact.

UNFPA's continuous commitment to the elimination of SGBV, especially child marriages, and the promotion of reproductive health and rights means that this partnership with various stakeholders will continue as it is deeply rooted in our shared responsibility and investment to protect and empower these young vulnerable girls to ensure inclusive development.

Thank you very much for your attention.