

SOLIDARITY MESSAGE

17th Annual Youth Action Movement (YAM) Congress

Theme- Ending SGBV, the role of Youth

I would like to begin by saying thank you for having me today. UNFPA is always happy to be part of a process that empowers and builds the capacity of young people since this is key for the development of any country and in achieving the SDGs.

I would like to recognise and appreciate the YAM Executives and the Executive Director of PPAG Ms. Abena Agyapong, under whose leadership and guidance the 17th Annual Congress of the Youth Action Movement is taking place

As you may very well know, issues pertaining to young people as well as the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, are at the core of UNFPA's mandate as the reproductive health organization of the United Nations, and at UNFPA we know that these issues are very much reflected in the work of the Youth Action Movement as the youth wing of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, which is a long-standing implementing partner of UNFPA. The theme of this year's congress aptly captures this, by looking at the role young people have to play in the elimination of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Over the past few years, a lot has been achieved for and by young people against SGBV, as evidenced by several interventions carried out through partnerships and youth participation, in addition between UNFPA and YAM. Notwithstanding this, it is important to recognize that there are still

structural and institutional barriers that limits the capacity of young people to influence decision making regarding the violation of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence.

Other factors including insufficient investments in young people and youth-led initiatives, as well as inadequate education, have made it fundamentally challenging for young people to join the fight against SGBV.

Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, putting more and more young people at risk of gender-based violence and other inequalities.

Now more than ever, the role of young people in the fight against SGBV cannot be over-emphasized. Young people constitute over 50 per cent of Ghana's population, and with the right investments and in their capacity building and well-being, they would become a valuable resource to the nation. It therefore goes without saying that marginalizing or sidelining them in the fight to end SGBV will be detrimental to our collective cause.

How then do young people effectively engage in the fight to end sexual and gender-based violence?

- Through building their knowledge on SGBV issues including how to identify incidence of SGBV and the appropriate channels of redress such as the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service.
- Specifically focus on the girl child as she is one of the most vulnerable to SGBV

- Be actively engaged in social campaigns against SGBV, by using platforms available to them to advocate for policies and interventions aimed at ending SGBV.
- Join the fight against SGBV by educating themselves in order to ensure that they do not unwittingly become victims or perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence which can take many different forms.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say 'ayekoo' to the Youth Action Movement, especially to their dedicated leadership and committed volunteers, for their passionate work in promoting sexual and reproductive health of young people in Ghana.

You are demonstrating that given the opportunity, young people are willing and able to make positive change in their communities. Keep up the good work! And I wish you a successful congress!