

**STATEMENT BY
NIYI OJUOLAPE, UNFPA REPRESENTATIVE IN GHANA
ON THE OCCASION
OF THE LAUNCH OF “BECAUSE I WANT TO BE” PROJECT
BY THE FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA
ON TUESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2018.
AT THE WESLEY METHODIST HALL, PALLADIUM, ACCRA**

- ✚ Your Excellency, Mrs. Rebecca Akufo-Addo, the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana
- ✚ Honorable Metropolitan Chief Executive of the Accra Metropolis
- ✚ Distinguished Directors of Education, Health and of Social Welfare
- ✚ Your Majesties Nii Mei and Naa Mei
- ✚ Members of the Press Present
- ✚ Wonderful Young Persons
- ✚ Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure and humility that I stand before this august gathering on this very auspicious occasion when the First Lady of the Republic of Ghana launches the impressive “**Because I Want to Be**” project in the Accra Metropolis.

UNFPA is, and has always been happy to work with the First Lady on her projects, which often align with our Organisation’s mandate. I urge you to recall her great determination and effort to ensure the functionality of the Maternity Wing of the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital last year. I know that today, her effort has brought immense relief to pregnant women and their families in particular but the entire nation in general.

Girls grow up to become women; women and girls become pregnant and eventually become mothers. All over the world, where girls and women receive education, they live better lives and are able to take care of their families and children.

It is for the above reason that UNFPA endorses and aligns itself to the vision of the First Lady to ensure that girls, who drop out of school, gather courage and with the support of their parents and communities, go back to school in order to complete their education and contribute their quota to society. Furthermore, we endorse her vision, which also encourages those girls who are in school to remain in school.

UNFPA can confirm that, when these girls stick to school to pursue their education, Ghana will benefit by lowering its teenage and adolescent pregnancy rates, increase contraceptive uptake and better achieve its family planning outcomes with improvement in maternal health and a resultant decrease in maternal mortality ratio.

But! and this is a big but, if the First Lady's effort should succeed, the unflinching support of families of these girls and the societies or communities where they reside is extremely crucial. This is imperative and non-negotiable. Fortunately, Ghana has an enviable Educational Policy where basic education and secondary education are free. Parents and girls should take advantage of this and go as far as they can.

Today's launch by the First Lady should be seen as catalytic. It should help parents orientate themselves and appreciate the fact that the future of their wards (especially the girls) and their own future is linked to the total commitment to the education of these wards. Self-discipline and individual commitment is key. Families will have to sacrifice a lot to give education to the girls.

At UNFPA, we promote Comprehensive Sexuality Education. We believe that to keep away from adolescent pregnancies, girls and boys should benefit from age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, which is locally owned, culturally sensitive and relevant, evidence-based and fosters norms and attitudes that promote gender equality and inclusion. Comprehensive Sexuality Education also hones young people's critical thinking skills, promotes their participation in decision-making, as well as strengthening their capacities for citizenship. Indeed, the Ghana Education Service endorses Comprehensive Sexuality Education in schools and has recently taken steps to improve school curriculum with more beneficial topics. Our girls will benefit from this in school.

Your Excellency, UNFPA commits to stand by you on this project, which seeks to help young girls achieve their dreams, and not to crash them through careless sexual acts and unwanted pregnancies and unplanned childbirths. You can count on us.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.