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UNFPA GCC conducts KAP study on Birth Spacing in Oman

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UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, sub-regional office for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) Oman conducted a Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study on contraceptive use as continuing support to the Birth Spacing (BS) Programme of the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Oman.

In 2014, MoH developed a plan to strengthen the BS Programme, which implied the need for conducting this KAP study to assess the awareness of local community about BS and related methods. The objectives of the study include identifying the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Omanis about their contraceptive use, as well as exploring the barriers for service utilization. Therefore, the outcomes of this study, which is funded by UNFPA GCC and technically supported by WHO, shall be used as a base to develop

an updated and effective future communication plan focusing on modern contraceptives.

The study came after a very successful track record of cooperation between UNFPA, WHO and the Family and Community Health Department of the MoH, including the Women Health Assessment study in 2011, the Birth Spacing Programme Joint Review in 2013 and the Pre-conception Care mission in 2014.

This one month study, which was launched on the 20th of September 2015, helped in building the capacity of MoH staff to conduct Qualitative Researches independently in future. The staff had an intensive training on interviewing skills as well as data analysis during the study. "The KAP study is crucial and instrumental to build the Ministry staff's capacity and provide inputs for the way

forward", said Mr. Asr Tison, UNFPA GCC Representative.

The BS Programme was launched in October 1994, as an integral part of the maternal and child healthcare services, being a key component of the women's health policy and life course approach. The programme has various goals which include improving health of mothers, children and families, reducing maternal and infant mortality, providing the necessary skills to health providers in order to ensure quality service delivery, as well as raising awareness of the benefits of BS for the well-being of mothers and their children. A national communication plan was developed by the Department of Family and Community Health, in cooperation with UNFPA GCC and WHO, to promote BS, including yearly awareness campaigns and different educational materials about family planning and birth spacing (BS) and its benefits.

Population Development and Health

United Nations Day

As the world commemorates the contributions of the United Nations (UN) over the past 70 years, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is proud of its role in ensuring that people come first, and that no one is left behind.

The UN was founded 70 years ago on October 24, 1945, and since that time, the world has witnessed enormous advances in Reproductive Health (RH). UN Health care and birth spacing programme have saved countless lives and enabled women to pursue opportunities that had long been out of reach. These changes have helped policymakers to recognize that healthy and empowered women are drivers of prosperity and progress.

Seven decades after its founding, the UN remains a beacon for all humanity. Every day, the UN feeds the hungry and shelters those driven from their homes. The UN vaccinates children who would otherwise die from preventable diseases. The UN defends human rights for all, regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender.

More than 200 of the world's most iconic landmarks, from the Sydney Opera House in Australia to the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, have been lit UN blue when the sun set on

the Friday October 24 to mark the 70th birthday of the global organization.

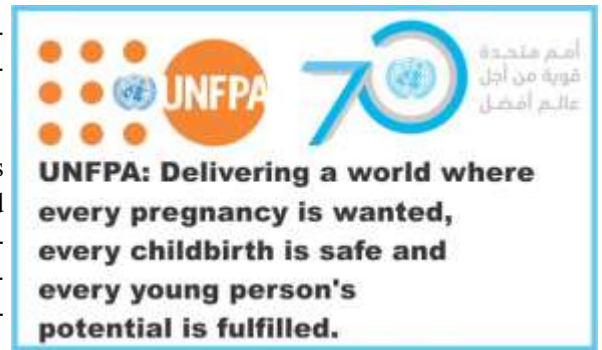
And since it began the operations in 1969, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, has been striving towards delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA is the lead United Nations agency that empowers women to exercise their right to decide when and how often to have children, and get the services they need for safe pregnancies and deliveries. It helps to treat maternal injuries such as fistula, provides young people with life-saving comprehensive health services and address the needs of women and girls in emergencies.

Last year alone, UNFPA helped 10.7 million couples to have the required RH services, 11.6 million adolescents to receive comprehensive health information and 10,000 fistula repairs. Today, UNFPA plays a major role in the biennial release of global maternal death data, helping to

pinpoint where mothers lives are most at risk.

In September 2015, the world leaders met at UN HQ to adopt new global objectives, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - a set of 17 ambitious social, economic and environmental targets, which all 193 members of the United Nations



have agreed to meet by the year 2030. The SDGs call for further reducing maternal deaths, ensuring universal access to RH care, and achieving equality for all women and girls.

UNFPA and its partners are working to meet these new goals. They are ambitious and will require unprecedented efforts across countries, continents and industries. Despite the enormity and complication of these challenges, the lesson of the last 70 years indicates that these efforts are necessary for the advancement of humanity, and progress will not stop.

UNFPA participates in Qatar Population Day celebration

Qatar Permanent Population Committee (PPC) celebrated Qatar Population Day on 27 October 2015 at the Four Season Hotel, Doha. The celebration, which was attended by UNFPA, Regional Director for Arab States, Mr. Mohamed Abdul-Ahad, was held under the theme of “First five-year Evaluation of the Population Policy”.

His Excellency Dr. Saleh Bin Mohammed Al Nabit, Minister of Development Planning and Statistics and PPC Chairman, inaugurated the event with a speech welcoming guests and participants, wishing them success in achieving the goals of Qatar Population Day, which is commemorated by the PPC every year in line with the United Nations World Population Day celebrations. H.E stressed that Qatar Population Day this year comes after the com-

pletion of the first stage of the population policy evaluation.

H.E pointed out that the PPC, in cooperation with UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and after outlining the population policy pivot points, has completed a significant part of the required evaluation. It seeks in the next phase to continue the evaluation process in the light of the results of the Mid-Term Review of the National Development Strategy (NDS), carried out by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, allowing more coordination and integration between the NDS projects and the Population Policy Action Plan.

UNFPA, Regional Director for Arab States, Mr. Mohamed Abdul-Ahad, focused during his speech on the importance of cooperation between PPC and UNFPA, pointing out that

the periodic review and continuous evaluation of population policies are vital. Thus, the evaluation carried out by Qatar for its population policy provides another example of commitment to professional standards and best practices in dealing with population and development issues.

These speeches were followed by various discussions as well as some working groups that were formed to address the six themes of the population policy (population and manpower; urban growth, housing and environment; education, training and youth; public health and reproductive health; women and children; and elderly and persons with disabilities), and in order to develop future directions for the second phase of the first six-year evaluation of the population policy.

World AIDS Day

A national strategic plan to tackle HIV in Oman will be completed by 2016, Dr. Seif Al Abri, Director General of the Directorate General for Disease Surveillance and Control, said during the World AIDS Day observance event held at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel, Muscat on the 1st of December 2015, under the theme “HIV treatment for all”.

A new guide for healthcare workers, aimed at enhancing HIV management was also unveiled at the event, which was held under the auspices of Dr. Mohammed Al Hosni, Undersecretary for Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health (MoH). Around 200 participants, including UNFPA, the United

Nations Population Fund, GCC Sub-regional office Representative Mr. Asr Toson, and UNICEF, WHO representatives, in addition to government senior officials and medical professionals, attended the event.

Dr. Al Abri also said, there is a plan to establish an educational HIV club, which will bring together those who look after HIV patients, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists and counsellors. The members will meet every three months to discuss various issues related to HIV, he noted.

The Director General also emphasized the importance of public awareness, which will help reduce discrimination

against HIV patients and the stigma surrounding the virus.

In 2013, UNFPA Sub-regional office for the GCC, played a vivacious role in piloting and establishing a functional Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Centre in Oman through technical and financial support, where people can have access to anonymous testing and the result is produced in a few minutes. Currently, five VCT centres are available in Oman, which are located in Al Khoud, Al Amerat, Quriyat, Sohar and Buraimi. In addition to the test, people visiting these centres are provided with counseling for risk reduction and prevention of the transmission of the infection.

Arab States Regional Director explores new opportunities for cooperation in GCC

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, Arab States Regional Director (RD) Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, visited the GCC Office in Muscat, Oman from 9th to 10th of November 2015. The two-day visit included courtesy meetings with senior Government officials at the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) along with the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat), National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) and National Youth Commission (NYC). Since Oman is the host country for the Sub-Regional Office for the GCC, the visit was to express gratitude, reconfirm UNFPA's commitment to Oman and solidify collaboration. The two-day intensive meetings were also attended by UNFPA GCC Representative, Mr. Asr Toson, and Programme Analyst, Mr. Salah Al-Saleh.

The trip marked Mr. Abdel-Ahad's first official visit as Regional Director to Oman. New opportunities for cooperation, particularly in the areas of Population and Development (P&D) Reproductive

Health (RH) and investments in youth, were on the agenda during UNFPA Arab States RD's visit to Oman in November 2015.

launching electronic health records, E-medical library, MOH contact center and the marine ambulance services.



UNFPA Arab States, RD Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad during his visit to UNFPA GCC Office

On 9th November, RD held a meeting with MOH, Undersecretary H.E. Dr. Mohamed bin Saif bin Sultan Al-Hosni. He congratulated MOH for the remarkable achievements in the health sector and for being recognized as one of the most progressive countries in the region in terms of health services coverage and quality of services. He also expressed his deep appreciation to MOH on its recent achievements of

Mr. Abdel-Ahad stressed that, GCC office will continue to strengthen its partnership with MOH, since the services provided by MOH are noted as exceptional and of high value in terms of support to the RH sector, which is an important area of UNFPA mandate.

During the meeting with NCSI's Chief Executive Officer H.E. Dr. Khalifa Al Barwani, the RD expressed appreciations for the long rela-

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relationship as well as the partnership with the Sultanate of Oman for its co-operation and trust in the work of UNFPA. He also indicated that UNFPA GCC is keen to continue with its Technical Assistance (TA) to NCSI, which is currently ongoing in the two areas of human resources management and strategy, and public opinions phone surveys. The ongoing TA was beneficial in providing high-level technical support to achieve the goals of the Center in terms of "Enhancing Knowledge" and providing timely information for decision makers.

RD also expressed willingness to explore other areas of cooperation, such as indicators for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Demographic Dividend and Big Data for development and its relation to statistics.

On 10th of November, the Regional Director met the National Youth Commission's Deputy Chairman Dr. Rashid Salim Hamed Al-Hajri. The NYC Deputy Chairman expressed appreciation for UNFPA's partnership, particularly in developing the NYC Internal Strategic Plan, which provided a road map to serve as an advocacy tool for the roles and re-

sponsibilities of NYC officials and governing body, systematic approach to decision making, capacity building of the members and a plan of action for NYC to shift from activity-based to programme-based; utilizing available resources and partnerships for strategic planning aiming at inclusiveness, long-term sustainable results, adequate governance structure and mechanism for better planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation.

During the meeting, the RD stressed that Oman is making positive progress in the area of demographic dividend and expressed willingness to assist NYC with the second stage of the strategic planning for the transformation process, to support the Commission in developing Youth strategy.

Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad also congratulated the Commission for its "Tamkeen" and "Istiktab" programmes, which focus on developing young people's skills and talents, civic participation and loyalty while promoting self-reliance and financial independence.

The RD also met with the senior officials of the Statistical Centre for

the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf (GCC-Stat). He congratulated the GCC-STAT on the development of its GCC-STAT 2015 - 2020 roadmap, and thanked the Centre for inviting UNFPA to participate in the GCC-Stat Coordination Meeting held in April 2015 between Regional and Arab Organizations in Oman. He also discussed future collaborations in areas of Big Data, Standardized Registry Based Census, SDGs and SDG indicators reporting, Demographic Dividend and other fields related to P&D statistics and information.

Finally, the Ministry of Social Development's Undersecretary H.E. Yahya bin Bader Al-Ma'wali received UNFPA Arab States RD at his office. RD congratulated MOSD on its recently developed Social Policy, which ensures sustainable and Human Rights based approach; in line with the culture and traditions of the Sultanate, in regard to Social Development. The two sides discussed viewpoints on several relevant topics to enhance cooperation between the Sultanate and the UNFPA in the field of organization's mandate and national priorities.

Population Development

UNFPA takes part in the World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum (WEF), which was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 25th to 27th of October 2015, is a holistic multi-stakeholder platform where leaders from business, government, civil society and academia connect. It aims at driving innovation and inclusive growth in and between regions of the world, as well as driving public-

the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2015 Summit.

The demographic dividend is not automatically achieved based on youth population figures alone, but rather depends on appropriate and timely public policies and investments to empower, educate and employ young people. Depending on the gaps and needs within individual countries, key investments

“By focusing on human dignity and human capital, and by empowering a healthy, educated and skilled population, many young and emerging economies can reap the greatest economic and social gains.” said Dr. Osotimehin. He added that, “Where fertility is declining, many countries stand poised to benefit from a demographic dividend. As their young people move



Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin- Executive Director at the 2015 World Economic Forum

private co-operation on the world's most pressing issues.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, represented by the Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin chaired the Global Agenda Council on the Demographic Dividend (DD) at

may address sexual and reproductive rights, access to family planning, better health systems and quality education, on-the-job mentoring and a welcoming climate for business.

into working adulthood with fewer dependents to care for, they will have more opportunity to acquire wealth, savings and purchasing power, and accelerate economic growth.”

On the sideline of the summit, UNFPA delegation led by Dr.

continued.. Babatunde was accompanied by the Arab States Regional Director, Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA GCC Representative, Mr. Asr Toson, Strategic Policy Specialist, Ms. Nisha Chatani-Rizvi, and Programme Analyst, Mr. Salah Al-Saleh.

The main goal of the delegation was to enhance the visibility of UNFPA in

opment by setting a role model in terms of providing education for girls on health issues. UNFPA's role in humanitarian context in regard to providing Reproductive Health (RH) services that save lives, as well as its measures to prevent Gender Based Violence (GBV) was discussed, in turn; MICAD expressed its appreciation for UNFPA's vital role. The Regional Director gave examples of

Minister for International Organizations, Foreign & Humanitarian Aid, Studies and Research and Ambassador Khalifa Almeere, Director of International Organizations Department. The attendants discussed the process to establish UNFPA officially as a Non Resident Agency (NRA) within the UAE UN Country Team (UNCT), in order to provide for better responsiveness and communication



Mr. Mohamed Abdel Ahad - Regional Director for Arab States, during a media interview at 2015 WEF

UAE, strengthen existing partnerships, establish new contacts with high level authorities in the Emirates, explore potential areas of cooperation and introduce UNFPA mandate as an international development and humanitarian actor.

On 25th October, the delegation met with H.E Mr. Hazza Al-Qahtani, Undersecretary, Ministry of International Cooperation and Development (MICAD). During the meeting UNFPA Executive Director highlighted UAE possible leading role in the SDGs and in providing assistance to Arab countries in area of youth devel-

UNFPA role as a humanitarian actor including its work in Zaatari camp in Jordan providing RH services to Syrian refugees. Assistance to Gaza - Palestine in the areas of RH and possibility of establishing UNFPA presence in UAE were also among the discussed topics. The two sides exchanged viewpoints on several relevant issues to enhance cooperation between the UAE and UNFPA in the field of UNFPA mandate and UAE's priorities.

The delegation also met with H.E Dr. Tarek Ahmad Al-Haidan, Assistant

with UAE authorities.

On 26th October, the delegation led by Regional Director (RD) met MICAD senior officials to advocate and raise awareness of UNFPA's work within the Development and Humanitarian sector. UNFPA Arab States Regional Director reiterated the mandate of UNFPA and its humanitarian role within the UN team, especially in Gaza, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Both sides discussed the possibilities of cooperation in addressing the crisis in Yemen and other countries in the region.

National AIDS Program Certifies Y-PEER Oman

On 28th October 2015, National AIDS Program (NAP), Ministry of Health, Oman held a certificate distribution ceremony for the Y-PEERs and HIV/AIDS counselors, who participated in the awareness generation outreach activities organized by NAP in each of 2014 and 2015 Muscat Festival and Salalah Tourism Festival.

During the ceremony, old and new Y-PEERs were invited to

compliments from my colleagues and friends on these skills, which I learned from UNFPA's Y-PEER network." She added that "I usually take health and gender as my key subject and talk about it when I get an opportunity among my peers."

Another successful Y-PEER that received the certificate was Ms. Hanaa Said Sulaiyam Al Senadi, who trained more than 220 peers by 2015, and in less than 3

staff nurse, which enables her to interact with her peers and organize many educational events.

One of the certificate recipients, Ms. Asila Ali Khalfan Al-Harrasi said, "After attending HIV/AIDS orientation organized by Y-PEER and UNFPA, I was able to talk with my peers on the HIV/AIDS subject".

Meanwhile, the ceremony presenter, Ms. Khadija Al-



Y-PEERs at NAP certificate distribution ceremony

share their experience of being volunteers (Y-PEERs) under this programme. One of the Y-PEERs, Ms. Islam Elgozuli Ahmed Elbashir, said "I am excited to be part of this proud network. Over the years, I see myself enjoying a grown new personality with more added skills. I receive

years. She used the Y-PEER's strong tests methodology of "Edutainment" to train this large number of peers on various subjects including HIV/AIDS, road safety, harmful impact of drug usage and environment issues. Today, this 29 years old active Y-PEER educator works as a

Mahrouqi from MoH, stated in her closing remarks that "the Y-PEERs collaboration with MoH has been very rewarding, especially in regard to reaching out to Oman rural and urban youth." She seized this occasion to thank all the attendants for their felicitous efforts.

Oman Y-PEER network participates in the 10 Days of Activism

Due to the importance of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the world momentum in this important phase of planning a post 2015 agenda, and in order to advocate for the youth agenda and for active participation of young people in their communities around the world to take leadership and stand up for their needs and issues integrating populations dynamics as a key

PEER Oman conducted HIV/ AIDS orientation session at the Asila bint Qais School in Al-Hail South, Muscat. The session took place on the 6th of December 2015 with a thematic exhibition set up by 2 Y-PEERs, who provided Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials produced by the HIV/AIDS Section, and paintings developed by Oman Y-PEERs

Y-PEER Network's main goal is to educate young people through peer education methodology; therefore, the network organized several annual campaigns over the past five years. The first 10DoA campaign was launched in 2010, when young people organized intensive awareness raising activities on youth Reproductive Health and Rights (RH&R) under the theme "Our year, our voice".

The aim of the campaign was to shed light on youth RH&R and needs. This campaign raised awareness through peer education sessions, street actions, concerts, fairs, trainings, advocacy in the media, and other activities in more than 25 countries in Eastern



Y-PEER Oman leading HIV session

point for campaigning for the post 2015, the Youth Peer Education (Y-PEER) Network launched the 10 Day of Activism (10DoA) Campaign from 21st of November till the 1st of December, 2015. The theme of the 10DoA this year was "Adolescent for Future: Global to Local, Let's Commit for Adolescents Rights."

In its turn, and building up on its previous campaigns over the past few years, the Oman Y-PEER network took part in the global awareness initiative with the support of UNFPA's Sub-regional Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries. As Part of its advocacy campaign and to commemorate the 2015 World AIDS Day, Y-

with the support of UNFPA-GCC Office. 32 adolescent girls from grade 5 to 10 visited the exhibition and took part in the HIV/ AIDS sessions. The sessions covered the topics of modes of transmission; prevention and largely on the stigma attached to the virus. The class was concluded with an open discussion on how to prevent HIV/AIDS.

"I heard there was an HIV session at the school, and decided to go and learn more about HIV because I know that it is important to get the right information," said 9th grade student, Tarteel Al-Wahaibi. "What I did not expect was that I would learn about it through games and fun activities," Al-Wahaibi added.

Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, West Africa and Asia Pacific; with the common goal to represent an active global Youth network in the international year of youth. This 10DoA continued the success under many themes to strengthen young people's capacities at national level, to advocate for their sexual and reproductive health and rights among their peers and policy makers, and to advocate for the meaningful involvement in the post 2015 agenda as well as addressing key population's issues. It is worth-mentioning that now more than 42 countries of member and non-members states in the network are participating in the annual 10DoA activities on the national and international levels.

Youth

Oman Y-PEER Network at the International Day of Non-Violence

On the 2nd of October 2015, the Y-PEER Oman network members participated in the United Nations International Day of Non-Violence commemoration ceremony held at the Embassy of India in Muscat in collaboration with

non-violence, peaceful co-existence and harmony along with messages about road safety, harmful impact of drugs and environmental issues. On the other hand, the Y-PEERs held a series of planning meetings among the

Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand, Iran, Kenya, Indonesia and representatives of the embassies of other countries, who joined the “Candle Lighting” ceremony on the stage.



Y-PEER Oman at International Day of Non-Violence

Rajayoga Centre for Self-Development, to mark the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

Y-PEER Oman member performed a sketch, which conveyed the need to abjure violence and follow the path of

network and deployed various theater techniques with a video in the background to engage the audience.

Many dignitaries were present at the commemoration, which included ambassadors of the Netherlands, Palestine,

Y-PEER Oman members utilize theater skills, Edutainment tools and participatory drama methodology to raise awareness on healthy lifestyles, reproductive health, and civic engagement in Oman.



United Nations Population Fund
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UNFPA, The United Nations Population Fund: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

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