SPECIAL EDITION
NEWSLETTER
UNFPA REGIONAL DIRECTOR for West and Central Africa on OFFICIAL VISIT TO CAMEROON
3rd-7th October 2021
Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin made her first official visit as UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa in October 2021 in Cameroon.

She was invited to take part in the third Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum in Yaounde and subsequently weighed-in on the advocacy to promote UNFPA’s program at the country level, meeting with government officials, funding and strategic partners, UN staff members, implementing partners, civil society organizations and the media. Throughout her visit, Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin pleaded for an acceleration in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those contributing directly to the achievement of the Three Transformative Results, laid down in the UNFPA’s Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, namely:

- «Ending preventable maternal deaths»
- «Ending unmet need for family planning»
- «Ending Gender-Based-Violence and harmful practices, including child marriage».
Since 2018, a forum for regional cooperation on stabilization, peacebuilding and sustainable development comes together under the aegis of the host government. It brings together the eight governors of the areas most affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region. Organized by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the forum is supported by the African Union, UNDP, the Crisis Management Initiative and the German Foreign Office.

After Maiduguri (Nigeria) in 2018 and Diffa (Niger) in 2019, the third forum was hosted in Yaoundé (Cameroon) from the 4th to the 5th October, 2021. Its aim was to assess and analyze the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). It provided an opportunity to build on the achievements made since the 2019 forum and to strengthen regional and cross-border cooperation in the fight against insurgency and terrorism in the region.

Advocacy for a greater support to the Lake Chad Basin

UNFPA seized the opportunity provided by the third Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum to call for greater funding in order to capitalize earlier interventions carried out with the support of donors such as: The European Union, the French Embassy, the Japanese Embassy, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the Government of Norway, the Government of Denmark, etc. The services offered so far and which need to be pursued and extended involved.
Protecting women and girls from Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and restoring the dignity of GBV survivors.

Training and integrating both teachers and pupils from koranic schools in the formal school system. Helping pupils from koranic schools to have better socio-professional perspectives as a result of their integration in the formal school system and the labor market.

Training youth leaders in peacebuilding processes, civic education and social cohesion. Making them “Ambassadors of peace” in their communities, affected by Boko Haram attacks.

Providing life and professional skills training as well as socio-economic support to empower young people. Preventing them to get enrolled in violent extremist groups.

Snapshots of some intermediary results

In the framework of the Hub set up in Maroua, Far North Region of Cameroon, to coordinate interventions carried out by UNFPA in the context the Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus.

- **Youth resilience:**
  - **27 558** Young people trained in peacebuilding
  - **17 748** Young people trained in life skills and civic education
  - **850** Youth benefited from socio-economic support to generate income and as a means to strengthen their resilience.
Contribution to peacebuilding:

34 Community platforms, Multipurpose Youth Centers, Social and Women Centers were empowered.

109 Youth leaders trained to mobilise their peers in communities in order to sensitize them against violent extremism.

10,829 Adolescent and young men and women sensitized as prevention measure to counter violent extremism in their communities.

700 Young women and girls trained and benefitted from sewing machines to start their businesses.

500 Trained young persons received assistance to start their small ruminant livestock breeding business.

5 Municipalities started integrating the priorities of women and young people in their local development planning and budgeting.

Reference documents

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UNFPA Country Office in Cameroon is completing its 7th Cooperation Program (2018-2021) and is engaged with the Government in the approval process of the 8th Country Program Document (2022-2025). This latter is based on both UNFPA Strategic Plan (2022-2025) and Cameroon’s National Development Strategy (2021-2030 or NDS 30). The Country Program Document is also aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026).

Reflecting with the stakeholders on the key achievements from the 7th Program and positioning UNFPA at the country level in the next cooperation cycle were top priorities in the agenda of Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin’s visit in Cameroon.

Regional coordination platform for the Lake Chad Basin in Maroua, Cameroon

Cameroon’s integration in the SWEDD Project

This platform brings together all UNFPA offices of affected countries. It was established in line with the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko-Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad. It leverages on existing projects and initiatives; goes beyond the classical approach to humanitarian response and takes into consideration the cross-border and sociodemographic dynamics in the Lake Chad Basin.

In 2020, Cameroon integrated the Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project at its second phase. The project seeks to increase women and adolescent girls’ empowerment and their access to quality reproductive, child and maternal health services in the Far North, North and Adamawa Regions. It also promotes social and behavioral change and reinforces advocacy at policy development level.
Since 2018, UNFPA implements the Maternal, New-born and Infant Health Promotion Project in the Far North, North, Adamawa and East Regions, where maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity rates are the highest in Cameroon. The project is funded by the Government and the Islamic Development Bank, whereby UNFPA leverages its comparative advantages on sexual and reproductive health.

The project has been implemented throughout the 7th Program and highly accelerated the country efforts toward “ending preventable maternal deaths” and “ending unmet need for family planning”, two out of the Three Transformative Results of UNFPA.
Cameroon’s Prime Minister and Head of Government, Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute and UNFPA Regional Director, Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin, share a light moment. Testimony of a relationship based on high trust, built over several years. Thanks to the work of the Ministers, the Country Representatives and their respective teams.

His Excellency, Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister of External Relations and Mrs Argentina Matavel Piccin discussed diplomatic issues surrounding the cooperation between Cameroon and UNFPA. This included UNFPA’s contribution to curb the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, thanks to the joint technical platform for Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Discussion between both parties centred on current achievements and strong support for the next Country Program. The Minister recommitted his Government’s contribution to the UNFPA Global programme
Mr. Alamine Ousmane Mey, Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), granted an audience to Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin. The Minister expressed his Department’s strong belief and commitment to invest in women and girls’ well-being and empowerment. Most specifically, he took the engagement to throw his weight behind Government’s allocation of resources for family planning commodities.

Dr. Manaouda Malachie, Minister of Public Health met UNFPA Regional Director and UNFPA Country Representative during an audience. They discussed on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health, particularly the considerable decline in maternal mortality ratio, the fight against obstetric fistula and the continuous and improved supply of modern contraceptive methods to the last mile.

During his meeting with UNFPA Regional Director, Mr. Mounouna Foutsou, Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education emphasized the continuation of youth-oriented peacebuilding and counter violent extremism initiatives. Accompanied by the President of the Cameroon National Youth Council, Mrs. Fadimatou Iyawa Ousmanou, the Minister stressed appreciation of UNFPA’s efforts to ensure access to age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services for youth through comprehensive sexual education.
The Regional Director, Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin, accompanied by the Country Representative, Mrs. Siti Batoul Oussein, was received in audience by some institutional donors. She received feedback from the Delegation of the European Union, the High Commission of Canada and the South Korean Embassy in Yaounde. Donors expressed commitment to UNFPA’s Agenda to achieve the Three Transformative Results by 2030. They also expressed appreciation for the improved coordination among UN Agencies.

The Head of Delegation of the European Union to Cameroon, His Excellency, Mr. Philippe Van Damme and his team, during the meeting with the Regional Director and the Country Representative of UNFPA.

Audience granted to UNFPA Regional Director and Country Representative by the South Korean Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Kim Jonghan.

His Excellency, Mr. Richard Bale, High Commissioner of Canada to Cameroon, granted an audience to UNFPA Regional Director.
Some beneficiaries from stabilization projects carried out in the Lake Chad Basin came from Maroua to give feedback to UNFPA’s Program stakeholders.

Youth networks’ leaders from the National Youth Council, AfriYAN Cameroon and RENATA joined the stakeholders’ meeting. They shared their experience of setting up a youth platform to accelerate the realization of the Three Transformers of UNFPA in Cameroon.
Jointly with representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), the Ministry of External Relations (MINREX) and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF), UNFPA Regional Director co-chaired a partners’ and stakeholders’ meeting in Yaounde. Participants came from government institutions, the donor community, civil society organizations, implementing partners and the media.

Talking on the upcoming 8th Cooperation Program, stakeholders acknowledged the transformative nature of UNFPA’s interventions in the life of the people. Mr. Jean Tchoffo, Secretary General at MINEPAT emphasized that: “UNFPA’s Transformative Results are key for the development of human capital, the second pillar of the national development strategy.”
Appeal was made, during this meeting to embrace innovation, inclusiveness and acceleration in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Engaging the media

The media fully covered the Regional Director’s visit in Cameroon. However, a highlight of this coverage was a press conference held on the 7th October 2021. It was an opportunity for both parties to discuss on priority areas of UNFPA’s intervention. These included efforts to increase women and girls’ empowerment; to strengthen health systems in order to end preventable maternal deaths, including obstetric fistula and to fight and prevent Gender-Based Violence (GBV).
Jointly with Mrs. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of UNDP’s Regional Bureau for Africa, Mrs. Argentina Matavel Piccin attended a UN Country Team meeting. The team led by UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Matthias Z. Naab discussed key interagency, cross-cutting, emerging and challenging issues engaging UN Agencies in Cameroon.
DIALOGUE WITH UNFPA STAFF

UNFPA staff talked and exchanged with the Regional Director. This moment was an opportunity to interact on the efforts and issues in delivering UNFPA’s mandate in Cameroon. While the staff based in Yaounde were present at the conference room, those from field sub offices and working spaces were connected through a video conference call so as to take part in this one-off encounter.

Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Mr. Roger Medjo, President of the Local Staff Association (LSA), expressed gratitude for the organization’s commitment to the well-being of the staff and for the crucial role played by its Duty of Care team since COVID-19 outbreak in Cameroon. He also acknowledged the support given by the Country Representative, Mrs. Siti Batoul Oussein, in the creation of the LSA.

From advocacy with key stakeholders to motivating staff to carry out UNFPA’s mandate, the visit of the Regional Director to Cameroon brought new momentum. This involves strengthening the partnership, bringing more innovation and accelerating the achievement of the SDGs in the West and Central Africa Region.