

PRESS RELEASE

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The Government of Canada commits additional funding to ‘Rapariga Biz’ initiative as COVID-19 impacts the sexual and reproductive health and rights of vulnerable girls and young women in Mozambique

To support the Government of Mozambique in its continued effort to mitigate the secondary impacts of COVID-19 for 250,000 of the most vulnerable girls and young women across 20 targeted districts of Nampula and Zambezia, the Government of Canada commits an additional \$2.5 million CAD (approximately \$1.9 million USD) under the multi-sector sexual and reproductive health and rights initiative, Rapariga Biz.

The contribution supplements regular Rapariga Biz funding, provided by the Governments of Sweden and Canada, for activities which, since March 2020, have been adapted to respond directly to the impact of COVID-19.

This additional funding aims to lessen the devastating impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable girls and young women. Disruption of critical services, increased economic stress, restrictions on travel, school closures and a breakdown of safety nets are exacerbating vulnerabilities and worsening inequalities. Girls and young women are at higher risk of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, early marriage and other forms of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and teenage pregnancy.

Led by the Government of Mozambique, with assistance from UN agencies (led by UNFPA in coordination with UNESCO, UNICEF and UN Women), Rapariga Biz aims to prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancy by empowering girls and young women to make informed and healthy decisions about their lives and gain access to critical health, education, justice, and social services.

“It is vital that we continue to respond to the acute needs of adolescents and youth, harness their energy and experience and ensure their participation as change agents in the COVID-19 response. The Canadian funding will allow us to achieve just that and ensure that young people are at the heart of our response,” says the Secretary of State for Youth and Employment, Mr. Oswaldo Petersburgo.

Supplemental funding by the Government of Canada will expand the availability, quality and accessibility of sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services and information for girls and young women as part of the national response to COVID-19.

Activities include the use of mobile clinics, training of health care providers, provision of COVID-19 school health kits for students, distance learning opportunities for adolescents and youth, participatory behavior change campaigns, adolescent and youth engagement in the response, and improving pathways to respond to violence and economic recovery.

“In addition to the threat of the virus itself, the pandemic has shown us its potential to reverse hard-earned gains on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and young women. Continuing to draw on our shared expertise, we remain committed to supporting the Government of Mozambique in sustaining the success of Rapariga Biz to transform the lives of girls and young women in Mozambique,” shares Andrea M. Wojnar, UNFPA Representative in Mozambique, on behalf of UN agencies involved (UNESCO, UNICEF and UN Women).

The Canadian supplemental funding will also enable the establishment of additional micro-enterprises to increase economic opportunities and sustain the livelihoods of girls and young women, as well as support youth who play a vital role in COVID-19 prevention and mitigation of secondary impacts during the pandemic.

As High Commissioner of Canada to Mozambique, Caroline Delany points out, “The COVID-19 pandemic inflicts its greatest harm upon those who have the least resources and fewest alternatives. By increasing support to Rapariga Biz, Canada aims to equip some of the most vulnerable - girls and young women - with the power to make their own choices about their futures. Supporting youth is essential because they are key influencers when it comes to the all-important task of stopping the spread of the pandemic.”

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in the country, Rapariga Biz successfully reached nearly 700,000 girls and young women through mentorship, psychosocial support, information on adolescent sexual and reproductive health through SMS and radio novels, economic empowerment opportunities, and education, health and justice services.

END

NOTES TO THE EDITORS

About Rapariga Biz

The first joint UN programme for adolescent girls in Mozambique, Rapariga Biz, led by the Government and coordinated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and implemented with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Women and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was launched in May 2016, to empower adolescent girls with improved sexual and reproductive health, leadership, citizenship and human rights with the goal to prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Through funding by the Governments of Sweden (as the largest donor) and Canada, Rapariga Biz aims to reach 1 million vulnerable young women and girls in Zambezia and Nampula.

About the Government of Canada:

Canada established diplomatic relations with Mozambique in 1975, following the latter's independence. Mozambique is among the largest recipients of Canadian international assistance, most of which is provided through Canada's bilateral development program. Canada has contributed more than 1.1 billion dollars in development assistance since 2010. In line with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are at the heart of our approach to Mozambique. Aligning with Mozambican priorities, Canada is working towards three main objectives: increasing access to quality services in health and education to ensure human dignity; broadening social and economic empowerment, especially of women and girls; and, establishing the foundations for a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous Mozambique. Particular emphasis is placed on advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

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