

Natalia Kanem

Executive Director, UNFPA

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Dr. Natalia Kanem is the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health and rights agency. Appointed by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017, Dr. Kanem has more than 30 years of strategic leadership experience in the fields of preventive medicine, public and reproductive health, social justice and philanthropy. She started her research career in academia with the Johns Hopkins and Columbia University schools of medicine and public health.

Dr. Kanem joined UNFPA in 2014 as the Country Representative in the United Republic of Tanzania and in 2016 was named Deputy Executive Director in charge of programmes. Previously Dr. Kanem served as founding president of ELMA Philanthropies, Inc., a private funding institution focusing on Africa's children and youth, and as a senior associate of the Lloyd Best Institute of the West Indies.

As a Ford Foundation officer from 1992 to 2004, she helped pioneer work in women's reproductive health and human rights in West Africa, and subsequently served at the Foundation's headquarters in New York as Deputy Vice-President for its peace and social justice programmes in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and North America.

Dr. Kanem holds a medical degree from Columbia University in New York, and a Master's degree in Public Health with specializations in epidemiology and preventive medicine from the University of Washington in Seattle. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard University in history and science.

Listed on the 2019 Gender Equality Top 100, Dr. Kanem is recognized for her leadership in advocating for rights and choices for women and girls and as one of the most influential people in formulating global policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Sustainable Development Goals era.

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health and rights agency, which aims to end the unmet need for contraception, end preventable deaths in pregnancy and childbirth, and end gender-based violence and harmful practices in all forms, including an end to child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Dr. Kanem is the fifth Executive Director of UNFPA since the Fund became operational in 1969.