

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

JANUARY 2025



BACKGROUND

The MOPAN assessment of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reviews organisational performance, effectiveness and results during a period of significant global events and internal changes. They include the following:

- **UN system reforms:** The UN General Assembly's adoption of the 2018 repositioning resolution and the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).
- **COVID-19 pandemic:** The global health crisis and its social and economic impact.
- **Adoption of transformative results:** UNFPA adopted three goals for 2030: i) to end preventable maternal deaths; ii) to fill the unmet needs for family planning, and iii) to end gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful sexual practices.
- **Evolution of strategic planning:** The successive implementation of the first two UNFPA strategic plans (2018-21 and 2022-25) leading up to 2030 and the achievement of the transformative results.
- **Organisational reforms:** Internal changes, including relocating key HQ staff to Nairobi.



Chad, 2024 – Neonatal medical unit for displaced women at Farchana camp.

Midwives funded by UNFPA and IRC speak to Sudanese refugees on the importance of good health practices at a health centre in the Farchana refugee camp. Since the beginning of the conflict in Sudan in April 2024, there has been a continuous influx of refugees and returnees.

Photo: © UNFPA Chad /Karel Prinsloo



Tumaco, Colombia
– Elisa Head Nurse
of the delivery
room at the San
Andrés Hospital
leads her team in a
training

UNFPA provided training to midwives in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, on human rights and leadership. The training contributes to safer births, reducing obstetric violence and ensuring more choices for women through pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum care.
Photo: © UNFPA / Carolina Navas

KEY FINDINGS

This MOPAN assessment of UNFPA highlights strong progress since the previous one, emphasising key achievements and opportunities.

UNFPA's mission is to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled, including in humanitarian settings. To achieve this, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 focuses on three transformative results (3TRs): ending preventable maternal deaths, addressing unmet needs for family planning, and eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), with a commitment to prioritising populations left behind.

Despite a challenging operating context, UNFPA has successfully delivered the outputs of its strategic plan, even if achieving the 3TRs and the related SDGs by 2030 will still require a significant effort, as the slowing progress on the 3TRs shows.

As UNFPA embarks on the development of its next strategic plan, it now has an opportunity to revisit its strategic priorities and transformative goals and consider strengthening its work on population change. It could also better capture cross-cutting priorities and rebalance funding priorities. UNFPA can show significant efforts and successes in generating funding for its work and in moving from *funding* towards *funding and financing*. Diversifying funding will have to remain a priority in the current financial environment.

UNFPA has successfully transformed itself into a development-humanitarian organisation, aligning its operating model with its strategic vision. To serve its partners better, UNFPA has delegated greater authority to regions and country offices and is relocating some of its functions. It has launched a new risk policy and established more robust, independent oversight functions to strengthen accountability, transparency and responsible decision-making, including at country-level.

The assessment sees further scope for improving UNFPA's operational excellence by linking up its humanitarian and long-term work more coherently, making the impact of its work more sustainable, delivering even faster, and rolling out its new risk management policy in all countries consistently.

This Brief identifies UNFPA's main strengths and opportunities for improvement and offers considerations for the future. The conclusions of the assessment result from a granular analysis of performance against MOPAN's indicator framework, which are laid out in more detail in the MOPAN Assessment Report¹ and its Technical Annex. They are structured around key high-level messages addressing critical aspects of UNFPA's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability in a dynamic, complex global environment.

Progress and opportunities in delivering on the strategic vision and the Transformative Goals amid a challenging global context

UNFPA's operating context has changed considerably since UN Member States adopted the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action in 1994 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015. Economic uncertainty and the effects of international conflicts have added to the anxieties provoked by declining and ageing populations. Moreover, some governments and groups are increasingly expressing reservations about UNFPA's SRHR mandate and against gender equality more broadly. UNFPA personnel, programmes and local partners have had to navigate humanitarian crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. And while the digital transformation brings new opportunities for enhancing operations and impact, it brings new challenges as well, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV). Furthermore, climate change threatens the reproductive health rights and choices of women, girls and vulnerable populations disproportionately.

Nonetheless, UNFPA was able to report to its executive board at mid-term that it was successfully delivering the outputs of its strategic plan amid these challenges and the rapidly evolving international context. However, accelerating progress towards achieving the three transformative results (3TRs) and making a significant contribution to the SDGs by 2030 will require significant effort.

In 2023, at mid-term, UNFPA fully achieved five of the six outputs of its Strategic Plan 2022-25. Its scorecard shows that the quality of care it delivered stood out as did its work with adolescents and youth, and policy and accountability-

1. Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) (2025), United Nations Populations Fund, Paris, available at: <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unfpa2024/index.htm>



Palestine, 2024 – UNFPA-supported Mobile Healthcare Teams in the West Bank

Mobile healthcare teams, operated by the Palestinian Medical Relief Society with support from UNFPA, deliver services to vulnerable and isolated communities throughout Area C of the West Bank.

Photo: © UNFPA Palestine / Lisa Sabella

related matters. In contrast, its outputs on population change and data were only partially achieved. According to the mid-term review of the strategic plan, this was due to difficulties initiating census and other data collection mechanisms, the COVID-19 pandemic, and humanitarian crises, which have hampered efforts to generate and use data.

In terms of transformative results (outcome level), global progress towards ending the unmet need for family planning has slowed since 2021. UNFPA attributes this in part to the fact that several regions – including Europe, North America, Eastern and Southern Asia – have already achieved high levels of contraceptive use. As a result, reducing unmet needs further in these regions is increasingly difficult. The remaining unmet need is disproportionately concentrated in regions and contexts where women and adolescent girls face barriers such as the limited access to and choice of contraceptives; cultural, religious and social norms and gender inequalities that have limited women's autonomy regarding their reproductive choices; and the lack of favourable legal frameworks. The lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated these challenges. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that countries with the highest unmet for family planning, such as the 54 countries in the UNFPA Supplies Partnership, are continuing to make progress, with unmet need dropping by 2% since 2017.

Progress on reducing preventable maternal deaths also stagnated between 2016-22. UNFPA estimates that over 80% of countries will not meet their national maternal mortality targets by 2030 for several reasons: The failures of health systems, including resource constraints; health system fragility due to climate change and humanitarian crises thwart progress. So do weak supply chains and a lack of competent health staff (including lack of access to midwives); insufficient access to and availability of quality life-saving maternal and neonatal health care, including for marginalised populations; the lack of public trust in some health systems, and harmful gender and social norms.

Assessing progress towards zero GBV remains challenging, primarily due to a lack of comparable data to establish global trends (more than 80 countries are missing data for at least one SDG 5 indicator²), as well as variations in programming focus in different countries. **There has been some progress in reducing child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM),** areas where UNFPA collaborates closely in joint global programmes with UNICEF. No other types of harmful practices are tracked. While UNFPA has reported a decline in child marriage, the rate of this decline is insufficient to meet the 2030 target. Since UNFPA prioritised the end of child marriage among its transformative results, the rate of reduction in child marriage has accelerated slightly. The reduction of FGM has also evolved positively.

The opportunity to revisit strategic priorities and partnerships to ensure ongoing relevance for new challenges

UNFPA's work and achievements are relevant to partner countries within their national contexts and priorities.

A review of a sample of country programme evaluation documents shows that UNFPA's results are deemed highly relevant to beneficiaries, including the most vulnerable populations, thanks to thorough needs assessments. UNFPA also demonstrated the flexibility and adaptability needed to maintain intervention relevance in changing contexts, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the last MOPAN assessment in 2018, UNFPA's senior management and executive board have made far-reaching decisions to ensure the fund's ongoing relevance. The assessment found that UNFPA's Strategic Plan 2022-25 (and Strategic Plan 2018-21) had a clear long-term vision of achieving the 3TRs by 2030: ending preventable maternal deaths, ending the unmet need for family planning, ending GBV and harmful practices (especially child marriage and FGM). The Strategic Plan 2018-21 set the vision and charted the pathway towards achieving the TRs; Strategic Plans 2022-25 and 2026-29 seek to accelerate progress and tackle unfinished business. In addition, the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-25 is the first to contain a dedicated output on humanitarian action, reflecting its growing importance in safeguarding achievements during crises and attaining transformative results.

2. UN Women (2023). "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023"



Yemen, 2024 – RRM kits are distributed to families affected by flooding in Al Jawf

The UNFPA-led Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) stepped up its response, delivering life-saving aid to the most vulnerable individuals. By August, 1,560 families (10,920 individuals) had received emergency relief through the RRM.

Photo: © UNFPA Yemen

Enhancing cross-cutting priorities

Cross-cutting issues could be better addressed to ensure UNFPA's continued relevance and visibility. To achieve its results, UNFPA is committed to making greater use of **innovation and digitalisation**, called “accelerators” in its Strategic Plan 2022-25. It is preparing an innovation strategy, supported by the UN Equalizer Accelerator Fund, to channel funds for innovation. In rolling it out, UNFPA should ensure consistent approaches to innovation across the organisation and take advantage of learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities. In addition, while UNFPA has focused more on **climate change and climate-resilient programming** since the 2018 MOPAN assessment, this is still an area needing improvement. Two opportunities would be to emphasise the need for climate-adaptive health and protection systems and enhanced preparedness and robust emergency responses. UNFPA does not yet have a dedicated climate change strategy and results framework with clear objectives, indicators and targets.

Rebalancing funding partnerships and priorities

UNFPA can show significant efforts and successes in generating funding for UNFPA's work and in moving from funding towards “funding and financing”. Over the past decade, overall revenue has grown significantly by 52.7% (2014-23). Moreover, the organisation has surpassed the USD 1 billion benchmark and consistently exceeded its resource mobilisation targets throughout the 2019-24 assessment period. Humanitarian funding in particular has grown steadily from USD 293.7 million in 2019 to USD 444.3 million in 2023.³ This reflects the expanded role UNFPA has played in providing life-saving services in humanitarian settings. In addition, UNFPA strengthened partnerships with international financial institutions, with 29% of growth in funding originating from international financing institutions (IFIs) in 2023. Also, UNFPA has made efforts to diversify its funding sources. It has one of the highest numbers of core donors among the voluntary funded entities in the UN system (95 in 2023 and 96 in 2022), demonstrating the broad support by Member States of UNFPA and its mandate. UNFPA continuously seeks to broaden its donor base.

These successes mask concerning trends (KPI 3). Such trends include a decline in unearmarked contributions (core/regular resources) and a growing dependence on earmarked resources (reflective of a general trend within the donor community to towards earmarking funding). Despite the large number of donors overall, 98% of its core funding relies on the voluntary contributions of just 20 donors – all from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) countries. The likely withdrawal of one of its top donors would have significant consequences. In 2023, the USA was the second donor in terms of overall contributions, the seventh in terms of core contributions (USD 30.6 million), the second in non-core contributions (USD 131 million),

3. UNFPA Report on the Structured Funding Dialogue, 2023-2024

and the largest contributor to UNFPA's humanitarian response (more than USD 130 million).⁴ The UNFPA Resource Mobilisation Strategy 2022-25, with its three relevant priority objectives,⁵ contains important measures to sustain and shock-proof UNFPA's revenue base, but its implementation for the period and beyond is a challenge.

UNFPA will inevitably face greater funding challenges in the coming years. Notwithstanding its resource mobilisation successes, and despite efforts to diversify its funding sources, it has yet to rebalance its partnerships and continue to reach beyond governments. This entails looking at innovative ways to mobilise IFIs, other United Nations (UN) agencies, the corporate sector and foundations to ensure as much stability as possible, particularly in light of possible forthcoming funding gaps.

Funding challenges highlight the need to continue to use limited resources judiciously. UNFPA has already made a significant effort to ensure operational efficiencies. For example, in 2022, it realised an overall operational efficiency gain of USD 34.7 million related to UNFPA-specific initiatives on the one hand and initiatives with partner UN organisations on the other. Country programme evaluations indicate that interventions are designed to produce outputs in the most cost/resource-efficient manner available. Interviews suggest that marginal efficiency gains may still be possible, especially by leveraging shared resources and expertise in collaboration with other UN agencies, but they are likely to be limited.

UNFPA prioritises Tier 1 countries in allocating its resources in line with its commitment to leave no one behind in the 150+ countries and territories where it operates. The Strategic Plan 2022-25 prioritised the 54 countries furthest from achieving the TRs by 2030, most of which are in Africa. Furthermore, the minimum annual floor for all UNFPA country offices with a country programme document was raised from USD 300,000 to USD 500,000 in an attempt to ensure that all country offices can effectively fulfil their essential normative functions.

Funding therefore goes to the countries where it is most relevant for the TRs and where the need for support is highest. This creates consequences for Tier 2 and Tier 3 countries that merit reflection. Many country offices in middle-income countries receive little more than the annual floor of USD 500,000 of core funds to play UNFPA's normative role, mobilise additional resources, and implement country programmes. UNFPA's efforts to communicate the importance of core funds, a broad and diverse donor base, multi-year funding and early payments including through structured funding dialogues, are thus essential but difficult given current financial constraints and competition for funding. UNFPA continues to seek innovative ways to mobilise its own funds. However, it has not yet effectively shifted to leveraging domestic public and private financing especially and to collaborating with international financial institutions (IFIs), as announced in the Strategic Plan 2022-25.

The mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 identified gaps and challenges in implementing the shift to funding and financing TRs promoted by the UNFPA Resource Mobilisation Strategy and the ICPD agenda. Building on experiences and lessons learnt from its existing initiatives to operationalise the shift from funding to funding and financing includes the launch of the first development impact bond by a UN organization and implementation of the Strategic Investment Facility. Nonetheless, further efforts to leverage development financing are required. UNFPA's Financing the ICPD Agenda (2024-30) Strategy establishes priority objectives, strategic interventions and KPIs to drive efforts in this area. Increasing financing for the TRs will require solid engagement with key government donors, tailored approaches to emerging donors, expanded engagement in the multilateral space, and a greater focus on funding from programme countries. It will also require more and expanded partnerships with the private sector, philanthropy, individuals, IFIs, and regional banks. Recent progress in partnerships with IFIs include the new institutional framework agreements with five IFIs, including the World Bank Group.

4. United States of America | United Nations Population Fund.

5. Sustaining and shock-proofing UNFPA's revenue base with predictable, flexible, multi-year support; increasing, diversifying, and scaling resources required to deliver on UNFPA's mandate with core funding and non-core funding and advancing UNFPA's commitment to catalysing and leveraging finances to close the USD 222.2 billion funding gap for the strategic plan and its transformative results.

**Vanuatu, 2024 –
Executive Director
of UNFPA
Dr Natalia Kanem
visits programmes
in Vanuatu**

Dr Kanem with
mothers and babies
at Saupia Health
Centre North Efate.
Photo: © UNFPA
Vanuatu / Anirban
Mahapatra



Revisiting strategic priorities

UNFPA needs to re-think its strategic focus and prioritise its intervention areas based on new opportunities, available capacity and resources. The current sharp focus on the 3TRs concentrates efforts on dedicated priorities, but it may at the same time hinder UNFPA from engaging in other vital SRHR support beyond the TRs and supporting countries' efforts to achieve demographic resilience. The next review of UNFPA's strategic focus should consider new opportunities and risks and continue to ensure the fund's ongoing relevance and visibility. Interviews suggest that in countries where other national priorities have emerged, UNFPA country offices feel constrained by the TRs and fear that their organisation's relevance and visibility will decline. The narrow corporate focus on maternal health and contraceptives for family planning in particular makes it difficult for UNFPA to support governments in tackling other female and male SRH issues – HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)⁶, cervical cancer and infertility – and in creating a conducive socio-economic environment for empowering people to obtain their desired fertility.

The decision not to include population dynamics among the highest-level organisational goals has, to some degree, limited UNFPA's ability to address the complex demographic changes that many countries face. This is particularly relevant given UNFPA's unique mandate, expertise, and status as a major supporter of population data collection (administrative data, censuses and surveys). Including and elevating this area in line with the 2024 QCPR⁷ would allow UNFPA to fully leverage its expertise and mandate in this critical area and ensure its ongoing relevance and visibility. It would also allow UNFPA to better support countries to understand, anticipate and respond to demographic changes given the global trend of shrinking and ageing populations due to low fertility and outmigration.

Building achievements for operational excellence and performance and lasting results

Further strengthening the operational model

UNFPA has reviewed its operating model to align with its strategic vision and meet current needs. Against the backdrop of a growing number of humanitarian crises and displaced populations, UNFPA's earlier **successful transformation into a development-humanitarian organisation** and more recent measures to strengthen

6. Despite being part of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) that unites the efforts of 11 UN organisations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank.

7. United Nations (2024), Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, 25 November 2024, [A/C.2/79/L.60](#), para. 30



Syria, 2024 – Essential services are provided at the Jdeidet Yabous border crossing in Rural Damascus

As thousands of Syrian and Lebanese arrive at the Jdeidet Yabous Crossing, UNFPA Syria and the Syria Family Planning Association are on the ground providing essential health services and referrals to those in need.

Photo: © UNFPA Syria / Waseem Khadour

humanitarian action and coordination are laudable. There is evidence of these changes at several levels – at the strategic level, a dedicated output for humanitarian action in the strategic plan; at the structural level, the creation of a Humanitarian Response Division, and at the operational level, a revised Fast-Track Policy and Procedures. In addition, oversight now includes inter-agency humanitarian evaluations, and finances have benefitted from the successful mobilisation of non-core resources – including for the Humanitarian Thematic Fund. UNFPA is also committed to strengthen local and national capacities in humanitarian responses, in line with the Grand Bargain localisation commitments. In 2023, UNFPA partnered with 360 local and national actors, representing around 80% of UNFPA's Implementing Partners - and transferred approximately USD 141.5 million (34.9% of UNFPA's total humanitarian funding) directly to them - exceeding the Grand Bargain target of 25%. Of this, USD 135 million supported local and national NGOs, while close to USD 7 million funded local and national government responses.⁸

UNFPA has yet to link its humanitarian and development work more closely. From both a programmatic and funding perspective, its humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) work have not yet been successfully bridged. The UNFPA Strategic Plan does not highlight the OECD-DAC recommendation on the HDP nexus, and its implementation is not monitored. The programme design process does not sufficiently reflect the HDP spirit and most country programme documents make no reference to it. UNFPA policies and standard operating procedures for guiding a humanitarian response focus predominantly on the actions for an immediate response to nascent emergencies. The Office of Audit and Investigation Services' (OAIS) 2023 report on internal audit and investigation activities indicates that there was no overarching framework to guide country offices in integrating and operationalising their humanitarian response in existing country programme documents. Nor are standards or procedures for ensuring accountability for affected populations (AAP) are available.

To deliver faster, UNFPA can still resolve some bottlenecks. Overall, it delivers in a timely manner. It has filled surge requests efficiently, shortened its recruitment processes and delivered reproductive health commodity orders punctually. The MOPAN assessment confirmed this for the country level, too. However, bottlenecks remain, particularly

8. [Grand Bargain Self Reporting 2024 - ActivityInfo](#).

in emergencies. Country Programme Evaluations and MOPAN interviews point to occasional delays in disbursements and co-ordination. UNFPA can, through partnerships and contingency planning, expedite lengthy approval processes further, minimise administrative delays, and resolve product delivery bottlenecks.

In addition, **UNFPA has yet to find ways to make the impact of its work more enduring.** Its efforts to improve local capacities and advocacy for legal and policy changes are promising but the financial dependency of partners on UNFPA and the absence of defined exit strategies have also jeopardised sustainability. As flagged by OAS, it is particularly challenging to ensure greater sustainability in humanitarian response interventions.

To serve its partner countries better, UNFPA has invested in delegating greater authority to regions and country offices, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Decentralising important programmatic and financial decisions to regional and country levels has greatly facilitated partnerships and humanitarian action. For instance, UNFPA was able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic partly because it promptly delegated reprogramming and resource reallocation decisions to its country offices. Furthermore, since 2022, UNFPA representatives and office heads have been authorised to determine the modes of engagement for implementing UNFPA country programmes. However, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) finds that key decisions on human resources remain centralised even though UNFPA appointed new human resources business partners in its regional offices.

UNFPA's HQ Optimisation initiative is a major organisational reform to bring the organisation closer to the people it serves. UNFPA will need to closely monitor the achievement of the desired efficiency gains and benefits. The initiative was a response to lagging progress on TRs in many countries of the Global South. Consolidating the policy and strategy division and the technical division into one programme division largely located in Nairobi is a major step that implies relocating approximately one quarter of New York-based posts. The need for continued strong normative engagement is well-reflected in the new structure, both in terms of the staffing complement that will remain in New York and in terms of the consolidation of the Geneva and Addis Ababa Representation Offices into the Division for External Relations. Regional and country offices, where much of the normative work takes place, will also benefit from this move. UNFPA staff and executive board members alike generally welcome the integration, including, among other elements, the creation of a data and analytics branch.



**Cuba 2022 –
A group of seniors
attending the Day
Centre of the Belen
Convent in Old
Havana**

Ageing is a demographic and development challenge in Cuba. In 2021, the population aged 60 years and over represented 21.6% of the total population. The Belen Convent is financed and managed by the Humanitarian Services Unit of the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana which is supported by UNFPA.

Photo: © UNFPA /
Jorge Luis Baños

However, many UNFPA staff did not expect the relocation. Announced in September 2023 and scheduled to begin in March 2025, the relocation provoked personal and professional concerns. During interviews, stakeholders anticipated various challenges: communications with New York, the loss of talent, temporary disruptions to business continuity, negative impacts on UNFPA's normative role and its interactions with member state delegations, its presence in UN intergovernmental processes and activities in New York, especially given growing pushback against SRHR, and a heavy burden on the small liaison offices remaining in New York.

UNFPA has strengthened its role within the UNDS. It has contributed significantly to UN system-wide effectiveness by strengthening coordination, collaboration, and generating knowledge. It is well-aligned with member state expectations and the 2030 Agenda; it plays a key role in UN joint programmes and inter-agency mechanisms. It has distinguished itself in humanitarian settings particularly, notably SRHR and GBV in the provision of lifesaving, quality, multisectoral services in humanitarian emergencies. UNFPA's rapid response efforts in 50 crisis-affected countries in 2023 led to over 4.2 million people finding safety and protection from gender-based violence and over 10 million people accessing essential sexual and reproductive health services, including clean and safe delivery, prenatal care, emergency obstetric and newborn care, postnatal care, clinical management of rape, treatment, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and family planning. UNFPA has also taken a leading role in coordinating PSEA in several countries.

Still, UNFPA must reflect on its comparative strengths within the larger UN development system. Its strategic plan does not adequately articulate its comparative advantages relative to other UN agencies, which leads to operational challenges in the division of labour. This is particularly evident in the relationship with UN Women, where the lack of a formal agreement on the division of labour has led to coordination issues and missed opportunities for collaborating at the country level and in terms of synergies and efficiency. Additionally, UNFPA's Career and Performance Management system has historically overlooked staff contributions to the reform processes and inter-agency collaboration in the UN development system, although steps are being taken to address this.

UNFPA has actively embraced UN reforms and participates in the greatest number of UN joint programmes of all UN agencies. The reforms come with significant drawbacks, however. These include high transaction and monetary costs, including substantial financial contributions to the resident coordinator system and the management of a 1% coordination levy on earmarked contributions.



Ukraine – Staff care for newborns in incubators

Incubators provided to hospitals near the frontline, enable healthcare professionals to transport babies in need of care between facilities and also to more safely transport them to bomb shelters during air raids, allowing for a continuity of care.

Photo: © UNFPA
Ukraine / Revutsky Oleksiy

Continuously strengthening RBM and ERM practices for stronger results

UNFPA has been making efforts to optimise decision-making by better managing results and risks. It is also strengthening its oversight functions to ensure strong learning and accountability to its stakeholders.

UNFPA is making strides in fostering a results-oriented culture but there is still room for improvement in its results-based approach. It has a long history of implementing an RBM-based approach, and a “RBM Seal” was introduced to promote the use of RBM principles and standards by UNFPA country offices. **Its global monitoring and reporting systems still focus primarily on outputs due to challenges in attributing progress** to the high-level TRs to specific organisations. Moving from measuring outputs to measuring outcomes remains challenging. Moreover, reports to the executive board often highlight successes whereas critical self-assessments of underperforming areas are less prominent. UNFPA’s results reporting largely focuses on implementation and effectiveness while information on relevance, efficiency and sustainability is scattered.

UNFPA’s corporate monitoring system is improving but requires more adequate M&E resources – staff seniority, time and continuity. Indeed, staff levels and seniority vary substantially across the regions. Dedicated M&E officers are concentrated in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, the regions with larger country offices. Focal points arrangements are located primarily in regions where country offices have relatively smaller budgets. In addition, the regional offices covered by six regional M&E advisors have high staff turnover rates. Interviews and the peer review of the evaluation function indicate that these regional M&E advisors do not work exclusively on monitoring. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has been strengthened with a new UNFPA evaluation policy approved in 2024. The policy states that UNFPA will gradually include all types of decentralised evaluations in the revamped evaluation quality assurance and assessment system. In addition, IEO developed and rolled out since 2023 a pioneering strategy for a generative AI-powered evaluation function. The 2023 peer review of the UNFPA evaluation function recognised the independence and quality of the IEO but noted that decentralised evaluations are less independent and have feedback loops that could benefit from further strengthening.

Since the MOPAN assessment in 2014, the UNFPA enterprise risk management (ERM) system has matured. The 2014 MOPAN assessment had suggested that UNFPA improve its strategies for identifying, reducing, tracking, and reporting risks. The 2018 assessment found that UNFPA had made progress in its approach to risk and risk management. It found evidence at all organisational levels that staff was more aware of risks and that new processes had improved UNFPA’s ability to respond to and reduce them. It concluded that UNFPA’s financial and risk management systems were strong and carefully monitored). In April 2022, UNFPA launched its first ERM policy, spanning all oversight policies, and took measures to implement it. It established more robust, independent oversight functions to improve accountability, transparency and responsible decision-making.

The present assessment confirms that UNFPA has further strengthened ERM as a strategic corporate tool for navigating the uncertainties inherent in its work. The ERM Policy is an essential milestone in increasing risk maturity at all levels of the organisation, and moving beyond competencies, capacities and procedures towards an institutional culture and corporate framework for risk management.

Despite progress in this area, UNFPA still faces challenges in implementing its ERM system, particularly at the country level. A key area for attention is the timing and frequency of risk assessments, which are now required to comprehensively address external, delivery, operational, fiduciary, reputational, and safeguarding risks. While practical implementation at country level is still evolving, but it shows promising progress.

UNFPA oversight and accountability functions have been significantly strengthened. The OAIS was restructured, its handling of investigations improved, and the ethics office was enlarged. **Over the years, UNFPA has built a robust framework to address sexual misconduct** through its policies, personnel training, reporting mechanisms and survivor support services. The development of its first organisation-specific policy to protect from Sexual Exploitation



**Philippines, 2024
– Heavy rainfall
triggered severe
flooding and
landslides**

UNFPA Philippines with partners, learning about the needs of affected communities, especially when it comes to sexual and reproductive health services. UNFPA and MOSEP successfully delivered more than 300 dignity kits to those in need.

Photo: © UNFPA
Philippines

and Abuse (PSEA) in July 2024 further strengthened UNFPA's work in this area. It is a strong inter-agency player in PSEA, notably in supporting the UN's work to make implementing partners accountable. Opportunities for continuous strengthening remain. Resources merit strengthening especially to bolster country-level capacity and human resources to coordinate PSEAH efforts, including on sexual harassment. As the system-wide lead agency on gender-based violence prevention and response, UNFPA often acts as the provider of last resort for other agencies in supporting SEA survivors. It is therefore important that it delineate resources for GBV and PSEAH.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2026-29 offers a timely opportunity to revisit strategic focus and operating model.

Continuity in UNFPA's strategic focus and the underlying operating model offers significant advantages for the organisation and its member states. These include predictability, reduced risk, optimised processes, and enhanced brand reputation and employee engagement. However, sustained relevance requires a delicate balance between continuity and adaptation in response to evolving global, regional and national priorities.

Developing the new UNFPA Strategic Plan 2026-29 is relevant for paving the way towards a post-2030 Agenda, building on the foundations laid by the SDGs and setting ambitious new goals and targets to address remaining challenges and emerging issues. By loosening its strategic focus on SRHR beyond the TRs, UNFPA can strengthen its impact. This includes taking a more comprehensive approach to addressing demographic changes and leveraging digitalisation. It also involves strengthening its climate change efforts and the HDP nexus and addressing funding challenges. Through these actions, UNFPA can continue to be a leading force in advancing global health and development.

These strategic choices are being made in an unfavourable funding environment. The uncertainty in UNFPA's operating environment has inevitable consequences for the effectiveness and efficiency of its work and the sustainability of the results to which it contributes. Although UNFPA has made efforts to improve operational efficiency and to diversify sources of funding, those will not fill the gaps left by declining donor resources. If UNFPA is to continue its critical work in support of SRHR and strengthen its commitment to demographic resilience, it will need to mobilise additional resources to fully implement the next strategic plan.

UNFPA has shown commendable engagement in advancing system-wide effectiveness and is committed to learning from experience. The formative evaluation of UNFPA's engagement in the UNDS reform in 2022, the first of its kind in the UN system, is evidence of this. The fund's role in fostering inter-agency coordination and collaboration in development and humanitarian settings, generating data and sharing knowledge for evidence-based decision-making

UNFPA in numbers

INSTITUTIONAL LEADS

Finland and Switzerland

Overview

UNFPA was established in 1969 as the United Nations' leading agency dedicated to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Its mission is to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA is also one of the world's largest supporters of population data collection. The organisation is fully funded by voluntary contributions, principally from government donors. Its annual expenses stand at USD 1.5 billion (2023). UNFPA has its headquarters in New York; of its 4677 personnel, 86% are in country and regional offices and operate across 150 countries, including in 119 country offices.

UNFPA KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

119 country offices
and **6 regional offices**
serving 156 countries

Annual expenses:
USD 1 510.4m
(2023)

Headquarters:
New York
Executive board:
36 Member States

Of annual 2023
expenses:
USD 499.8m funded
from regular resources
USD 1 010.6m funded
from other resources

86%:
Proportion of
personnel in
country and
regional offices in
2024

-3.6%
Revenue growth /
mobilisation
(2023 compared
with 2022):

1 812
implementing partners
(in 2023)

4 677 personnel
in 2024 (including staff,
service contract holders, UNVs)

TOP 15 DONORS OF UNFPA (2023)

Member	Amount (million USD) Non-Earmarked	Amount (million USD) Earmarked
1. United Nations	0	233.6
2. USA	30.6	131.1
3. United Kingdom	10.1	119.3
4. Norway	56.8	57.2
5. Sweden	41.3	34.8
6. Netherlands	37.6	34.6
7. Denmark	33.1	36.8
8. Germany	52.1	13.3

Member	Amount (million USD) Non-Earmarked	Amount (million USD) Earmarked
9. Canada	11.3	50.7
10. European Commission	0	51.0
11. Japan	16.6	25.8
12. Australia	6.6	34.2
13. Finland	32.0	5.6
14. Switzerland	17.5	12.3
15. France	1.1	23.7

Source: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Top20Donors-2023.pdf>

is instrumental in advancing the SDGs and improving the lives of millions worldwide. This assessment calls upon UNFPA to remain a fundamental pillar of the UN system, based on clear comparative advantages. Continuing to shape and leverage UN reform processes would benefit UNFPA's performance and that of the entire UN system, including the UN Secretary-General's UN 2.0 Quintet of Change, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and the implementation of the Pact of the Future.

UNFPA may need to re-consider its goals in the context of the SDGs. The mid-term review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-25 indicates that the ambitious transformative results will not be achieved by 2030 at the global level, given current progress. UNFPA may consider additional outcomes – immediate or intermediate outcomes – between the outputs and the three TRs while maintaining alignment with SDGs 3 and 5 at the impact level. This would allow for more frequent monitoring and organisation-specific reporting.

Main strengths and areas of opportunity

Main strengths

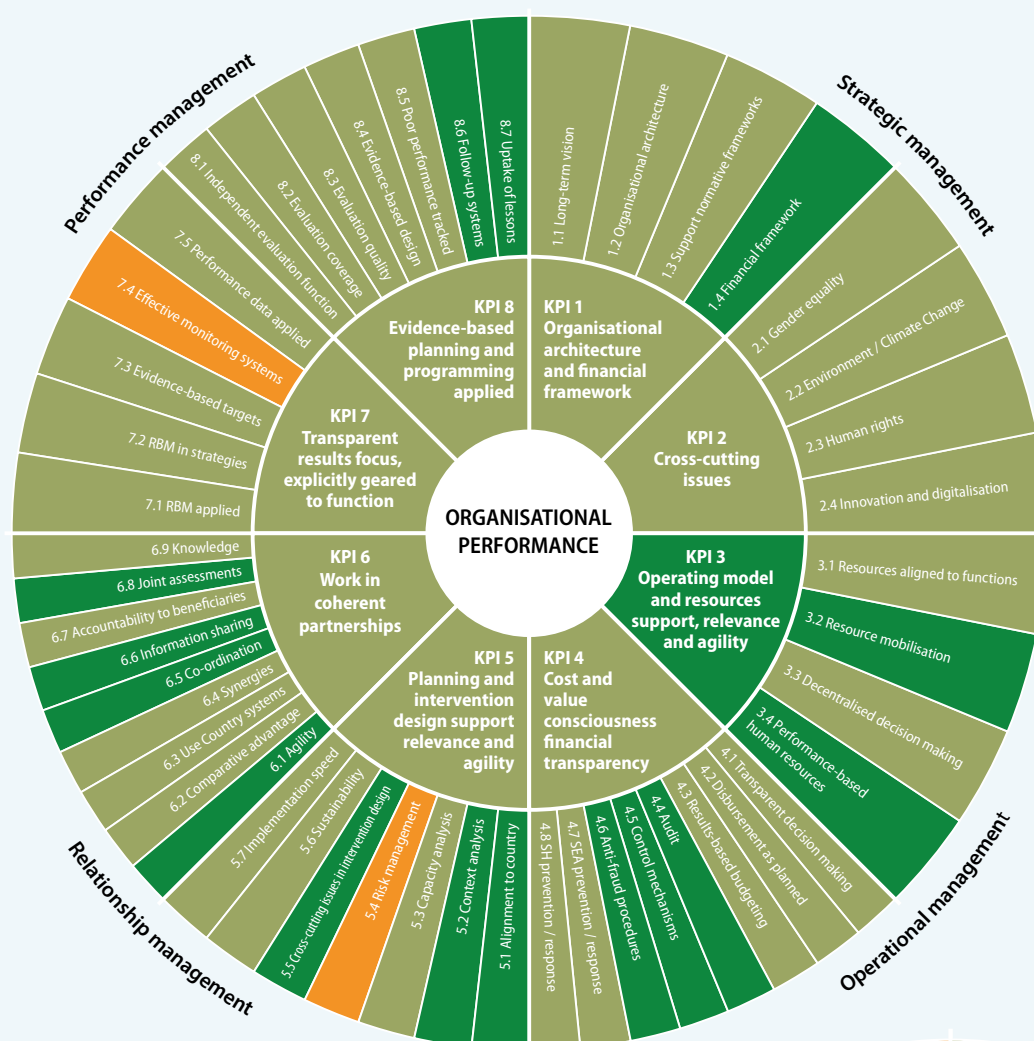
- UNFPA's Strategic Plan 2022-25 and long-term vision are strongly aligned with the SDGs through the transformative results.
- Building on the successes of previous reforms, UNFPA continues to be a fundamental pillar of the ongoing repositioning of the UN development system.
- UNFPA has further solidified its presence within the international humanitarian sphere in SRHR and GBV.
- The organisation demonstrates strong accountability in its uptake of lessons learned and of recommendations from evaluations.
- UNFPA has issued its first Enterprise Risk Management Policy and invested significantly in independent oversight functions.
- UNFPA's decentralised structure fosters agility and effective partnerships, as exemplified by its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Areas of opportunity

- Reaffirming UNFPA's core mandate in population and development would require a strong focus at the strategic and intervention levels
- While maintaining a focus on the transformative results, broadening UNFPA's scope would be necessary to encompass other SRHR issues within the framework of universal health coverage.
- Strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and reflecting it better in UNFPA's programme design process.
- Building on the new strategy for financing the ICPD Agenda, actively pursuing strategies to increase new funding from governments in the form of domestic resources and leverage additional development financing resources would be necessary.
- Although UNFPA's Social and Environmental Standards Policies contain provisions regarding Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), the organisation does not yet have a framework and guidance for AAP.

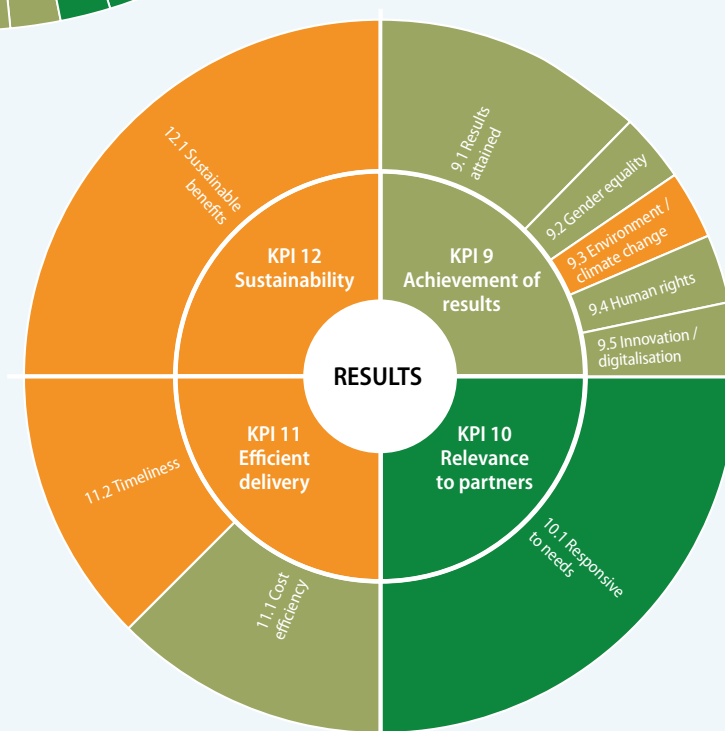
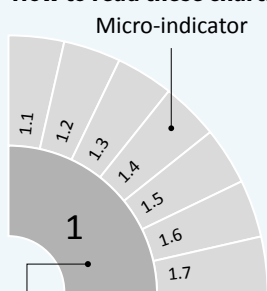
Note: It should be noted that MOPAN's approach to rating indicators has evolved since UNFPA was last assessed. Compared to the pre-2019 rating scale, the threshold for each rating has been raised to reflect the increasing demands of organisational performance in the multilateral system. This may explain some of the variation against previous assessments. A scoring graphic relating to this assessment, but using the previous rating methodology, can be found in the main report (Part I), Chapter 4.

FIGURE 1: UNFPA PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW



DISCLAIMER:
Each organisation MOPAN assesses has a unique mandate, business model and operating environment. The context of multilateral development and cooperation is dynamic; expectations and good practices change over time. The MOPAN framework reflects this unique context and evolution across different types of multilateral organisations. Comparison across assessments is thus strongly discouraged. For more information on the rationale underlying MOPAN's assessment ratings see Chapter 4 of the assessment report or the online technical annexes.

How to read these charts



ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT OF THE UN POPULATION FUND

The full MOPAN report provides a diagnostic assessment and snapshot of the organisational performance of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) within its mandate. It covers the period from 2019 to 2024. This is the fourth MOPAN assessment of UNFPA and builds on those completed in 2014 and 2018. UNFPA was assessed through a rigorous process and a collaborative approach, integrating the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. It provides UNFPA and its members with a robust account of UNFPA's organisational strengths and the areas where improvements can be made. The assessment draws on multiple lines of evidence (documentary, survey, interviews) from sources within and outside the organisation to validate and triangulate findings across 12 key performance indicators (KPIs) which are further broken down into more than 220 individual indicators. The assessment framework reflects international best practice and has been customised to take account of UNFPA's individual mandate and circumstances.

THE ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The approach to Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessments has evolved over time to adjust to the needs of the multilateral system. Starting in 2020, all assessments have used the MOPAN 3.1 methodology (MOPAN 2020), which was endorsed by MOPAN members in early 2020. The framework draws on the international standards and reference points, as described in the MOPAN Methodology Manual that is publicly available on the MOPAN website.

ABOUT MOPAN

MOPAN is a network of 22 members¹ who assess multilateral organisations, shape performance standards, and champion learning and insights to strengthen development and humanitarian results and promote accountability. Capitalising on the Network's unique cross-multilateral system perspective and expertise, MOPAN members work together to deliver relevant, impartial, high-quality and timely performance information as a public good through an inclusive and transparent approach. MOPAN's performance information mitigates risks, informs decision-making and supports change, helping to increase knowledge and trust among all stakeholders and ultimately to achieve a stronger and better-performing multilateral system.



For more
information

1. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Qatar, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States. *Türkiye is an observer.