

The Formative Evaluation of UNFPA's West and Central Africa Regional Programme (2022-2025) reviews progress in achieving three key goals: ending the unmet need for family planning, reducing preventable maternal deaths, and tackling gender-based violence. It examines the recently introduced strategic shifts and accelerators to address the region's complex challenges, such as rapid population growth, a large youth population, increasing humanitarian crises, and persistent inequalities. The evaluation aims to guide improvements for the rest of the current programme and shape the next Strategic Plan and Regional Programme (2026-2029).

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- UNFPA West and Central Africa (WCA) is aligning its planning and programming with the Three Transformative Results (3TRs), enhancing capacity and partnerships.
- The Leave No One Behind (LNOB) accelerator focuses on reaching underserved populations through specialized interventions and partnerships, including initiatives like SWEDD, mental health services in Burkina Faso, and digital supply chain innovations in Sao Tome and Principe.
- The megatrends are integrated by addressing climate change, food insecurity, and digitalization through projects like the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) programme, Transhumance project, and climate change youth actions.
- To scale impact, UNFPA is collaborating with extensive networks of partners like UNICEF, UN WOMEN, Tostan, and WAHO to scale up services and foster capacity-building initiatives.
- The humanitarian response capacity in the region is increasing across multiple countries, focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence (SRH/GBV) in emergencies and expanding coverage through decentralized teams.

CONCLUSIONS

- Accelerators and strategic shifts introduced in the 2022-2025 Regional Programme are largely well-defined and being implemented. However, the level of operationalization varies, and some require clearer organizational guidance.
- UNFPA's service delivery impact is declining due to funding constraints and regional insecurity. This necessitates a reassessment of UNFPA's role, with a potential shift towards a stronger normative role emphasizing policy advocacy and collaboration with other UN agencies.
- Capacity constraints, both in human resources and programme delivery systems, pose a significant barrier to implementation. Recent human resource realignment and capacity-building initiatives are addressing this gap.
- Effective implementation requires improved data analysis and evidence utilization. This includes integrating population and data activities with the 3TRs, strengthening intersectional analysis for the LNOB agenda, and analyzing the interplay of megatrends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Strengthen UNFPA's normative role through focused policy implementation to adapt to socio-political shifts.
- 2 Maintain service delivery, prioritizing high-impact interventions for marginalized groups, especially in humanitarian contexts.
- 3 Expand partnerships to scale interventions, including joint programs addressing megatrends.
- 4 Implement the Funding to Funding and Financing (F2FF) agenda by promoting guidance, ownership, and engagement with donors and international financial institutions.
- 5 Invest in evidence generation aligned with 3TRs, LNOB, social/gender norms, megatrends, and F2FF priorities.
- 6 Address capacity gaps by recruiting specialized personnel, exploring multi-country roles, and enhancing capacity building.