



Independent evaluation of the capacity of UNFPA in humanitarian action 2019–2025

Key highlights



Evaluation purpose and objectives

Purpose

Assess the evolution of UNFPA capacity to prepare for/respond to emergencies to assist operationalization and implementation of the next UNFPA strategic plan

Objectives

Assess the:

- **Relevance** of UNFPA's humanitarian programming to existing needs and emerging changes
- **Efficiency** of UNFPA's internal systems, processes, policies and procedures for humanitarian action around SRHR, GBV, coordination and humanitarian supplies
- **Effectiveness** and **coverage** of UNFPA's humanitarian interventions
- **Integration** of humanitarian principles, human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, climate action, data and social and environmental standards in humanitarian programming
- Strengthening of **resilience/adaptation**, and complementarity in line with the HDP continuum approach

Evaluation scope

- **Thematic:** All UNFPA strategies and programmes implemented in humanitarian settings.
- **Temporal:** 2019 – Q2 2025
- **Geographic:** All humanitarian response countries, regions, and globally.

Asia and the Pacific	Bangladesh	Myanmar
Arab States	Egypt	Somalia, Syria
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Moldova	Ukraine
East and Southern Africa	Uganda	Burundi, Madagascar
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia	Peru, Venezuela
West and Central Africa	Chad	Burkina Faso

* Countries in **bold** were in-person field visits (one per UNFPA region). The remaining countries were the subject of extended desk reviews.

Evaluation outputs

Desk review of UNFPA/external documentation and data

- 1500+ documents/datasets reviewed

Key informant interviews (KII) & Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

- 226 interviews globally, regionally, nationally
- 80 organisations/agencies – 50% UNFPA, 50% external
- 200 rights holders met with.

	Women/ Girls	Men/ boys	Total persons	Total KII/FGD	Target	% met
Global level (KII)	11	11	22	20	30-50	100%
Regional level (KII)	19	9	38	23	125-165	113%
Country level (KII)	185	165	350	183	30	77%
Total	391	209	600	249	245 (max)	100%

Conclusions



1

Relevance

UNFPA has a clear commitment to addressing the needs of women, girls, youth and vulnerable people within its mandate, although this is not fully operationally reflected. Its strategic positioning as a global humanitarian actor is being consolidated, but not yet fully established.

2

Effectiveness/Coverage

UNFPA has made considerable positive progress in supporting the delivery and coordination of increasingly high-quality SRH and GBV services. It has successfully implemented key service models, including the MISP, mobile clinics, and CVA. There has also been notable progress in youth engagement and leadership through initiatives such as the Youth Compact. However, the scale of need and growing limitations on available resources puts adequate coverage for vulnerable populations further out of reach.

3

Effectiveness of data

UNFPA is a leading actor in population data and demographics, and its data efforts have informed some policy advancements. However, these efforts remain overly fragmented and inconsistent, which limits evidence-based decision-making and the ability to demonstrate programmatic impact. The organization's expertise and relationships with national data actors are not fully leveraged for humanitarian planning due to inter-divisional disconnects.

4

Efficiency

Humanitarian operational efficiency has improved since 2019, driven by strategic restructuring, new policies, and the adoption of cost-effective modalities like CVA. However, the pace of progress is slow and is compromised by systemic internal fragmentation and persistent bottlenecks.

5

Coherence

The organization's humanitarian programming demonstrates strong internal coherence and integration between SRHR and GBV services at the country level. Externally, UNFPA has solidified its position as a credible humanitarian actor, fostering key partnerships and showing leadership in areas like PSEA.

6

Connectedness

UNFPA shows improving conceptual and programmatic links between humanitarian, development, and peace processes. This integration is increasingly visible in strategic plans and country-level operations that aim to build resilience through systems strengthening and anticipatory action. Efforts to localize aid have also been strengthened, with increased funding to national and women-led organizations. However, corporate guidance gaps on implementation and localization challenges persist.

Recommendations



1

Elevate UNFPA's strategic and leadership role in humanitarian action

Operationalization Actions

1. Develop a comprehensive standalone internal strategic framework for humanitarian action that reflects the life-saving nature of SRHR, GBV, and population data in an integrated approach. This should be a concise, time-bound (24-month) plan.

Key units: HRD, OED | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

2. Reinforce capacity for robust advocacy and leadership among senior management in inter-agency forums, particularly in resource negotiations.

Key unit: DHR | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Medium

3. Advocate internally to formalize this strategic framework to operationalize humanitarian commitments in UNFPA's 2026-2029 strategic plan.

Key unit: HRD | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low

Additional actions for consideration

4. Replicate the regional Humanitarian Roadmap created by WCA in other regions as an alternative to a global strategy, ensuring alignment with the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

Key unit: HRD, ROs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low

2

Focus on sustaining and coordinating targeted, high-impact SRH and GBV services

Operationalization Actions

1. Undertake a strategic prioritization and resource allocation exercise to target services for the most vulnerable populations with highest unmet needs.

Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

2. Strategically review UNFPA's position as provider of last resort in GBV, conducting a short assessment of its relevance and responsibilities in light of the ongoing humanitarian reset.

Key unit: HRD | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

3. Support a coherent transition of the GBV AoR from its IASC-mandated role while maintaining UNFPA's coordination leadership by actively engaging in consensus-building and advocacy to ensure an orderly shift to new coordination modalities. To include ringfencing UNFPA's global, regional, and national GBV expertise during and after the transition.

Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Medium

Additional actions for consideration

4. Ensure adequate training, supervision, and resources for staff and partners to uphold GBV and SRH minimum standards and systematize referral pathways.

Key unit: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium

3

Enhance operational agility, responsiveness and invest in people

Operationalization Actions

1. Revise general policies and procedures (e.g., for HR, supplies) to be more flexible for protracted humanitarian crises.
Key units: HRD, PD, DHR, SCMU | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
2. Develop clear and practical guidance on operationalizing risk appetite and "no regrets" policies, including risk-sharing (with donors and other agencies) and systematic quantification of risk.
Key units: HRD, DMS | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
3. Review the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Surge and GERT rapid deployment mechanisms.
Key units: HRD, DHR | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
4. Assess, identify, and target strategic investments in prepositioning humanitarian supplies at all levels, tailored to the most significant risks and needs.
Key units: HRD, ROs, SCMU | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
5. Increase the proportion of core funding allocated to dedicated humanitarian positions at country and regional levels to provide stability and continuity.
Key units: DMS and DHR | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Medium/High
6. Assess and streamline recruitment processes for humanitarian positions, using mechanisms like pre-vetted national rosters and adopting the "time-to-fill" metric.
Key unit: DHR | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

Additional actions for consideration

7. Adopt an agile, online, centralized knowledge management system for HRD policies and guidance.
Key unit: HRD | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low
8. Decentralize approval for local procurement of selected pharmaceuticals and provide Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for medication purchases.
Key units: HRD, SCMU, ROs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low

4

Enhance accountability to affected populations and localization efforts

Operationalization Actions

1. Systematically integrate consistent AAP mechanisms (e.g., feedback loops, community consultations) into every stage of the humanitarian programme cycle and partner agreements.

Key units: HRD, PD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low/Medium

2. Leverage innovative technologies, like mobile platforms, for community feedback and needs assessments where appropriate.

Key units: HRD, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Medium

3. Move beyond funding allocation to invest in genuine co-design and inclusive decision-making with local partners, recognizing them as true partners beyond service delivery, in line with enhanced risk management approaches.

Key units: ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

Additional actions for consideration

4. Enhance work with governments to transition humanitarian responses to national ownership and funding where appropriate.

Key units: ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low

5. Assign dedicated budget lines for organizational strengthening and overheads for partners, so they can participate on an equal footing.

Key units: DMS, ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low

5

Integrate and strengthen HDP continuum work, including climate adaptation and YPS

Operationalization Actions

1. Clarify responsibilities and foster collaboration between the Humanitarian Response and Programme Divisions, including potentially modifying corporate structures to break down silos (e.g., moving HRD under the Deputy Executive Director for Programmes).
Key units: PD, HRD, OED | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
2. Finalize and widely disseminate a comprehensive corporate framework and practical guidance on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) continuum.
Key units: HRD, PD, ROs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low
3. Develop a dedicated framework and guidance for humanitarian actions on climate adaptation as part of DRR, including in early warning systems, anticipatory action, and resilience-building.
Key units: HRD, PD, ROs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

Additional actions for consideration

4. Ensure that humanitarian needs assessments and response plans consistently include specific, integrated programming for young people.
Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium
5. Leverage UNFPA's leadership in the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and Youth Compact to strengthen partnerships with youth-led organizations in humanitarian settings.
Key units: ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium

6

Develop a unified humanitarian data strategy and system for outcome measurement for SRHR and GBV in humanitarian settings

Operationalization Actions

1. Follow up on the recommendations of the 2021 Baseline and evaluability assessment on data in humanitarian assistance.
Key units: HRD | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium
2. Develop and implement meaningful, standardized, outcome-oriented indicators for SRHR and GBV programming, moving beyond activity and output-level data.
Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Medium
3. Streamline humanitarian reporting requirements to reduce administrative burdens and reorient efforts toward genuine monitoring and organizational learning.
Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** High | **\$ required:** Low

Additional actions for consideration

4. Develop and implement a clear, unified humanitarian data strategy based on a single architecture, leveraging existing platforms like DHIS2 and GBVIMS.
Key units: HRD, PD, ITSO | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Low/Medium
5. Strengthen internal capacity for humanitarian data management, analysis, and visualization through dedicated staffing and mandatory "data literacy" training for all staff.
Key units: HRD, ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium
6. Systematically leverage UNFPA's expertise and relationships with National Statistical Offices to integrate population data into humanitarian planning.
Key units: ROs, COs | **Priority:** Medium | **\$ required:** Medium

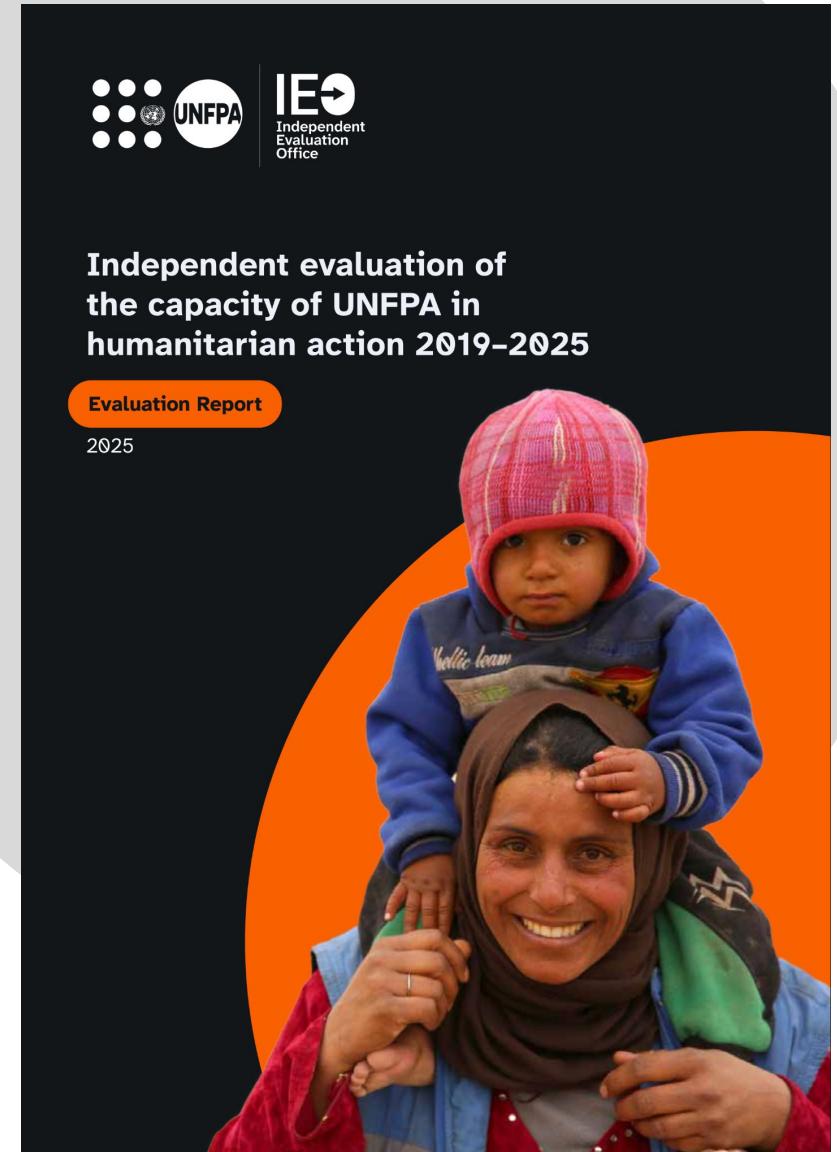
#HumanitarianEval

This evaluation and related products are available at
[**https://www.unfpa.org/humanitarian-action-evaluation**](https://www.unfpa.org/humanitarian-action-evaluation)

Available evaluation products

- Evaluation report
- Brief in English, French and Spanish
- Short video
- Management Response
- Volume II: Annexes

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