

Independent evaluation of UNFPA support to the integration of the principles of ‘leaving no one behind’ and ‘reaching the furthest behind’ 2018-2024



Evaluation Brief

UNFPA's commitment to the principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ (LNOB) lies at the heart of its mandate to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. This evaluation examines how LNOB principles have been integrated across UNFPA's strategies, programmes and operations, highlighting progress, innovation, and opportunities to build a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

242
documents
reviewed



Country case studies: Malawi, Pakistan, Türkiye

Regional case study: Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama, Costa Rica, Peru)

**Thematic
case studies**



**Humanitarian and triple
nexus settings:**
Sudan, Syria, Nigeria,
Burkina Faso

**Upper-middle-income and
low-fertility contexts:** Albania,
Bosnia and Herzegovina, China,
Iran, North Macedonia, Thailand



378
people
interviewed

26
focus group
discussions

306
focus group
participants

61
survey
respondents

Key highlights

- LNOB is widely recognized across UNFPA as central to achieving its mandate. Staff view it as a strategic priority, and its integration into the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 has fostered growing alignment and momentum.
- UNFPA has implemented a wide range of LNOB-responsive and, in some cases, transformative interventions that are grounded in local realities and have the potential to drive long-term change.
- UNFPA's collaboration with civil society, especially with organizations led by marginalized groups, is a clear strength. However, limited funding flexibility and shrinking civic space can hinder deeper localization and sustainability.
- UNFPA has demonstrated a sustained commitment to addressing vulnerabilities in humanitarian contexts through mobile outreach, cash and voucher assistance, dignity kits, and inclusive service delivery. Yet challenges remain in addressing intersectional needs and applying the LNOB framework systematically in rapidly evolving humanitarian contexts.
- UNFPA brings unique value to UN systemwide efforts to LNOB through its recognized strengths in advocacy and civil society engagement. Further, its leadership in generating and applying population data further positions UNFPA as a key actor in advancing LNOB across the UN system and beyond.

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- Initial investments in systems, structures and staff capacity have laid a foundation for deeper institutionalization of LNOB. However, gaps in resource allocation, monitoring systems, and funding flexibility continue to limit consistent implementation, especially at regional and country levels. Strengthening internal coherence, values clarification, and results tracking will be key to advancing transformative, locally led LNOB programming.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that LNOB is fully embedded in UNFPA's corporate planning, budgeting, performance management and leadership structures, with clear roles and accountability at all levels.
2. Advance diversity, equity and inclusion by aligning recruitment, onboarding and staff development with LNOB values. Address both structural and attitudinal barriers to ensure an inclusive work environment.
3. Integrate LNOB consistently across policies and external messaging. Develop clear guidance and a compelling narrative to position UNFPA's LNOB approach within and beyond the United Nations system.
4. Develop a series of concise, action-oriented issue papers to support staff learning on LNOB implementation across diverse contexts, and foster knowledge exchange across regions.
5. Enhance engagement with local and user-led organizations by adopting more flexible, inclusive, and power-sharing approaches. Use UNFPA's convening power to protect civic space and promote social norm change.
6. Revisit the Operational Plan and Theory of Change to clarify conceptual linkages, strengthen practical guidance, and position LNOB as a means to achieve structural transformation.

Report available at unfpa.org/evaluation

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