

Costed Evaluation Plan Arab States Regional Office

Programme cycle	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Arab States Regional Programme (2026-2029)
Indicative budget	US\$ 27.34 million (Regular resources: 17.04 million; Other resources 10.3 million)
Regional programme priority areas (Outcomes)	<p>Outcome 1: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal deaths.</p> <p>Outcome 2: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of unmet need for family planning.</p> <p>Outcome 3: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of all forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices.</p> <p>Outcome 4: By 2029, adaptation to demographic change has strengthened the resilience of societies for current and future generations, while upholding individual rights and choices.</p>
Previous regional programme evaluation	<p>Period covered: Regional Programme (2022-2025)</p> <p>Year of completion: 2024</p> <p>Evaluation quality assessment rating: Satisfactory</p>
Gap mapping/analysis of relevant evaluative evidence and knowledge gaps that are strategically important to inform the design and implementation of the upcoming regional programme	<p>The costed evaluation plan for the Arab States Regional Programme (2026-2029) is based on an analysis of the following centralized and decentralized evaluations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Arab States Regional Programme 2022-2025 • Independent Evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 • Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2012-2020) • A Synthesis of UN System Evaluations of SDG 5 (2024) • Evaluation of UNFPA Support to the Prevention of, Response to and Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices (2012-2017) • Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021) • Joint Evaluation of Phase II (2020–2023) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage • Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership (2021-2030) • Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Population Dynamics and Data (2014-2022) • Evaluation of the UNFPA Capacity in Humanitarian Action (2012-2019) • Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls • Formative Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Adolescents and Youth (2015-2022) • Mid-term Evaluation of the Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund – Phase III 2018-2022 • Yemen Country Programme Evaluation (2015-2024) <p>Outcome 1: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of preventable maternal deaths</p>

Evaluative evidence strongly supports the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of midwifery models of care for health outcomes. However, there are gaps in midwife numbers and restricted scopes of practice in the Arab States region. UNFPA has responded by engaging policymakers to support midwifery strategies, advocate for women-centered care and midwives, and bolster midwifery education.

With a recent tool expected to provide economic impact data from country investments in midwifery, the Regional Programme Evaluation (RPE) (2026-2029) will synthesize findings and offer strategic recommendations for scaling sustainable solutions to reduce preventable maternal mortality, particularly through promoting midwifery-led care. Additionally, a thematic paper will determine the relevance of UNFPA's midwifery work at regional and country levels, assessing how efforts have accelerated commitments through changes in regulations, education, and leadership in countries with significant focus on strengthening midwifery.

Outcome 2: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of unmet need for family planning

While existing evaluations highlight high out-of-pocket expenditures, stockouts, and overreliance on the private sector as critical barriers to family planning access, more evidence is needed on socio-cultural barriers to contraceptive uptake and continuation, including the influence of social norms, community leaders, and religious interpretations. In the region's fragile settings, there is a distinct lack of evidence on adaptable, effective, and resilient family planning approaches. This includes understanding delivery modalities that ensure continuity of care amidst displacement, and how to integrate services within broader humanitarian responses. Furthermore, evidence remains scarce on the scalability, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness of family planning interventions in these contexts.

The RPE (2026-2029) will address these multifaceted gaps by assessing the regional programme's effectiveness in overcoming both financial and social barriers to family planning access. It will also provide crucial evidence on UNFPA's work on domestic financing for sexual and reproductive health, required human resources, and the sustainability of current financing strategies. The Mid-term Evaluation of Social Norms Approaches in the Arab States Region will also provide relevant evidence.

Outcome 3: By 2029, accelerate the reduction of all forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices

Evidence remains scarce regarding UNFPA's support to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) in the region, especially related to GBV prevention and engaging men and boys to change discriminatory social and gender norms and GBV case management.

The RPE (2026-2029) and Mid-Term Evaluation of Social Norms Approaches Adopted in the Arab States region are designed to address these evidence gaps, with a special focus on evaluating the strengthening of models for multi-sectoral GBV service provision, including robust case management, and regional contributions to women's and girls' empowerment and the promotion of positive masculinities.

Outcome 4: By 2029, adaptation to demographic change has strengthened the resilience of societies for current and future generations, while upholding individual rights and choices

There is insufficient evidence to inform UNFPA's normative guidance for the complex demographic transition in the Arab States region, particularly regarding rapid fertility shifts and their socio-political/economic interplay. In addition, widespread humanitarian settings across the region contribute to a scarcity of population data, underscoring the need for UNFPA to promote innovative data generation approaches. However, evaluative evidence on the effectiveness of UNFPA's support in promoting these approaches remains limited.

The RPE (2026-2029) will assess the regional programme's effectiveness in supporting countries to understand and respond to the demographic shifts in the region. This includes the effectiveness of support to strengthen the use of population data in policymaking, advocate for and support policies on population aging and fertility transitions, as well as the integration of SRH and GBV into climate resilience and disaster risk reduction planning. The evaluation

will also assess the regional programme's support for innovative data generation approaches in complex settings, including geospatial population modeling, civil registration and vital statistics, and other administrative data systems.

Cross-cutting areas

Social norms. There is a clear need for stronger evidence on social and gender norms programming in the Arab States region, particularly concerning the effectiveness and scalability of interventions aimed at transforming these norms. Existing evaluations provided limited information on the relevance and effectiveness of UNFPA's efforts to change social and gender norms in the region, specifically those that affected the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents and youth.

To address this, Mid-term Evaluation of Social Norms Approaches in the Arab States Region will systematically evaluate the relevance, contextualization and effectiveness of country office strategies, covering sexual and reproductive health (like family planning) and GBV and harmful practice programming, to identify what works and why across the region's diverse sociocultural contexts. In parallel, the RPE (2026-2029) will offer a complementary analysis, focusing on the regional office's support for social norms change interventions to country offices, assessing its relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and coherence.

Humanitarian preparedness and response. Existing evaluations of UNFPA's humanitarian action in the Arab States region highlight evidence gaps concerning the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions in protracted crises, and a nuanced understanding of how humanitarian efforts integrate with development and peacebuilding initiatives. Despite strong evidence on the positive impact of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) on affected populations, a critical gap also persists in the strategic analysis of the organizational cost-benefit balance of CVA.

The Evaluation of UNFPA's Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Support to Strengthen Community Resilience in the Arab States Region will assess UNFPA's humanitarian preparedness and response, focusing on localization efforts (support for women- and youth-led organizations in line with humanitarian reset priorities, and co-leadership of relevant national GBV coordination fora) and the application of CVA. The RPE (2026-2029) will provide complementary evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of humanitarian interventions across the region, including anticipatory action and climate-smart preparedness.

Evaluations

Evaluation title	Intended use of evaluation findings	Type of evaluation	Humanitarian evaluation (yes; partially; no)	Joint evaluation (yes; no), including partners where applicable	Programme/ project budget in US\$	Evaluation estimated budget and source of funding (regular resources (RR); other resources (OR)) in US\$	Timeframe (month and year)	Evaluation manager

Mid-term evaluation of social norms approaches adopted in the Arab States region	Inform regional office support to country offices; revise regional and country-level work plans; develop more context-specific and evidence-based interventions to transform harmful gender norms across countries in the region	Thematic evaluation	Partially	No	27.34 million	70,000 (40,000 (RR); 30,000 (OR)	October 2026 - May 2027	ASRO Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor
Evaluation of UNFPA humanitarian preparedness and response support to strengthen community resilience in the Arab States region	Inform regional office technical, programmatic and operational support to strengthen country office humanitarian preparedness and response capacities; guide stronger engagement with women- and youth-led organizations in priority countries and territories (Lebanon, Palestine and Somalia); strengthen UNFPA's positioning for humanitarian response in the region; inform strategic decisions on future CVA investments; support donor engagement and resource mobilization for humanitarian action; drive evidence-based adaptations to regional humanitarian preparedness and response programming	Thematic evaluation	Yes	No	Tbd	40,000 (RR)	February - September 2027	ASRO Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor / Regional Humanitarian Advisor
Regional Programme Evaluation (2026-2029)	Inform the design of the new regional programme; include interventions of a catalytic nature contributing to country-level results in the new regional programme; determine the discontinuation of interventions under the new regional programme; inform decision-making and the strategic positioning of UNFPA in the region; enhance accountability towards UNFPA country offices, national governments, donors, and rights holders	Regional programme evaluation (RPE)	Partially	No	Tbd	80,000 (RR)	Preparation phase: October - December 2027 Implementation phase: January - September 2028	ASRO Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor

Evaluation Capacity Development

Evaluation capacity development activity	Objectives of evaluation capacity development activity	Category of evaluation capacity development (internal; national)	Type of evaluation capacity development (individual; institutional; enabling environment)	Targeted stakeholders	Estimated budget and source of funding (regular resources (RR); other resources (OR) in US\$	Timeframe (month and year)
Participation in IEO-led cross-regional evaluation capacity building workshop	Develop the knowledge and skills of regional planning, monitoring and evaluation staff to provide capacity development, technical assistance and quality assurance for country-level evaluations, in particular country programme evaluations	Internal	Individual	ASRO Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor	3,400 (RR)	June 2026