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United Nations Population Fund

UNFPA strategic plan 2026-2029

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Annex 4

Global and regional programmes

1. Rationale

Summary

This annex presents the purpose and primary objectives for the UNFPA global and regional programmes, 2026-2029, and the management and governance mechanisms for these programmes. It also outlines the main focus and priorities of the UNFPA global and regional programmes, and their contributions towards achieving the results of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2026-2029.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|----|
| I. | Programme rationale | 2 |
| II. | Objectives and design..... | 3 |
| III. | Focus of the global and regional programmes | 6 |
| A. | The global programme..... | 7 |
| B. | The regional programmes | 9 |
| IV. | Management and governance mechanisms..... | 10 |

I. Programme rationale

1. The UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2026-2029 calls for urgent actions to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realize reproductive rights for all, and accelerate the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, with a heightened focus on addressing inequalities within and between countries, and leaving no one behind across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum.
2. As the last of a series of three strategic plans leading to 2030, UNFPA will intensify its efforts to accelerate the achievement of the existing three outcomes: (a) ending the unmet need for family planning; (b) ending preventable maternal deaths; and (c) ending gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage, across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum. To drive lasting progress on the three outcomes, UNFPA is adding a fourth outcome to support countries in adapting to and harnessing demographic change to strengthen their resilience to megatrends and emerging crises. This will ensure a decisive push towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action.
3. The global and regional programmes form a core component of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2026-2029, and are essential to its effective and efficient implementation. In response to the guidance provided by Member States through the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR), outlined in United Nations General Assembly resolution 79/226, adopted on 19 December 2024 – which recognized that “...national efforts should be complemented by supportive global and regional programmes, measures and policies aimed at expanding the development opportunities of all countries...” – the global and regional programmes complement country-level efforts by providing a coherent, integrated approach to advancing the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda across global, regional and national levels.
4. Recognizing the significant changes in the development and humanitarian operating environment, the global and regional programmes are designed to ensure that UNFPA work maintains relevance, remains forward-looking, and is adaptable to the rapidly evolving context. The global and regional programmes support intergovernmental and regional processes through data-informed policy dialogue, evidence-based advocacy, and inter-agency collaboration. The programmes play a pivotal role in promoting sexual and reproductive health and realizing reproductive rights (SRHRR) through the life course, advancing gender equality, youth inclusion and empowerment, and responding to demographic shifts through rights-based policy solutions. By delivering thought leadership, providing guidance for context-specific technical support and capacity building, leading evidence and knowledge generation and exchange, and fostering innovation and partnerships, the global and regional programmes facilitate a cohesive, integrated approach to strengthening national systems and capacities to accelerate progress across the four outcomes. In a context of complex polycrisis, rapidly evolving demographic shifts, climate change and other megatrends, the programmes enable UNFPA to support countries strategically and sustainably in addressing the present and emerging challenges, thus contributing to resilience and adaptation for sustainable development.

5. The global and regional programmes for 2026-2029 build on lessons learned from the implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, and evidence from key organizational and programmatic evaluations. Guided by the 2024 QCPR, the ‘Pact for the Future’ and the ongoing United Nations system reform initiatives, including UN80, the design of the programmes reflects a strengthened emphasis on sustainable financing and financial resilience, efficiency, and a strategic focus to safeguard impact and continuity amid increasingly unpredictable funding environments and polycrises. The global and regional programmes for 2026-2029 have been informed by a broad consultative process and shaped by a rigorous internal quality assurance review.

6. Evaluative evidence from several organizational and programmatic evaluations have informed the strategic direction of the global and regional programmes, 2026–2029. These insights have shaped the theory of change and the overall programme structure. Key lessons include: (a) the need to strengthen evidence and knowledge, solutions, high-quality disaggregated data, including humanitarian data, data analytics and foresight to better identify and respond to the needs of marginalized populations and ensure no one is left behind; (b) the importance of strengthening the normative role of UNFPA and promoting gender-transformative approaches to tackle social and gender norms and stereotypes, through evidence-based policy dialogues, political engagement and partnerships, in advancing gender equality, human rights and inclusion; (c) the critical need to ensure sustainable financing and investment for the three transformative results and the ICPD Programme of Action; (d) the imperative of holistic, multisectoral, people-centred and age-responsive approaches that recognize and enable the agency, empowerment and participation of adolescents and youth, including leveraging youth participation in humanitarian response, peace, security and climate resilience; (e) the necessity of a contextualized humanitarian response and preparedness, ensuring resilience and achievement of results; (f) the importance of promoting better integration of humanitarian, development and peace-responsive interventions; (g) the importance of an emphasis on the impact of demographic changes and other megatrends in achieving the three transformative results and advancing the ICPD Programme of Action, while ensuring rights and choices for all; (h) the importance of expanding strategic partnerships and South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) to further leverage resources and promote innovation and collaborative solutions; (i) the critical need to prioritize country-specific technical support, promoting risk-informed, conflict-responsive, and climate-resilient programming that is responsive to local realities and ensures sustainability; and (j) the need for a dedicated framework that ensures synergies across thematic areas, cross-regional collaboration and cross-country exchange towards more efficient implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan and the ICPD Programme of Action.

II. Objectives and design

7. The overall purpose of the global and regional programmes is to: (a) strengthen commitment to advance the ICPD Programme of Action; (b) accelerate progress and scale-up actions toward achieving the four outcomes across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum; (c) drive the ICPD Programme of Action forward with targeted expertise, data and evidence for an inclusive, people-centred development, with focus on leaving no one behind and on targeting those left furthest behind first; and (iv) spearhead forward thinking and adaptation to demographic shifts,

crises, climate change and other megatrends to build more resilient societies. The programmes apply a life-course approach, recognizing that people have different and evolving needs throughout their lives. The main target groups are women, adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls, and marginalized populations. Marginalized populations include, inter alia, persons with disabilities, Afro-descendent and indigenous peoples, older persons, people living in poverty, those affected by conflict or displacement, and individuals facing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, race, ethnicity, migration status, HIV status or other intersecting factors.

8. The specific objectives of the global programme are: (a) building global engagement, partnerships and global consensus, engaging in intergovernmental policy dialogues and advocacy to position and advance UNFPA strategic plan and the ICPD agenda within global processes and platforms, and addressing the growing pushback on human rights – especially sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality; (b) promoting gender and age-responsive international norms, standards and guidelines on SRHR, gender equality, GBV and harmful practices, adolescent and youth empowerment, and demographic resilience – all underpinned by individual rights and choices – to influence frameworks, laws, policies and programmes at global, regional, and national levels; (c) facilitating the systematic generation and use of high-quality disaggregated data, analysis, evidence, technical knowledge and foresight to inform evidence-based decision-making in achieving the four strategic plan outcomes; (d) supporting through regional and country programming the scale-up of high-impact flagship initiatives to accelerate the achievement of the strategic plan outcomes; (e) leading the humanitarian coordination in SRHR and GBV, enhancing operational capacity and action on humanitarian preparedness and response through regional and country offices; (f) guiding a ‘whole-of-organization’ approach of shifting from funding to ‘funding and financing’ for the ICPD Programme of Action and promoting SSTC and enhancing broad-based partnerships; (g) mobilizing, harnessing and utilizing technical expertise and capacity across the whole organization in providing tailored and context-specific programme and technical support; (h) guiding a more coherent and integrated humanitarian, development and peace-responsive approach to effective and efficient policy advocacy, programming and operations support, ensuring the flexibility to allow for context-specific approaches in different settings.

9. The specific objectives of the regional programmes are: (a) driving policy dialogue and advocacy with regional and subnational entities to accelerate the three transformative results and implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action; (b) adapting and promoting gender and age-responsive international norms, standards and tools for regional and national implementation; (c) enhancing the capacities of countries, partners and UNFPA country offices in the generation and utilization of high-quality disaggregated data, evidence, analysis and technical knowledge to inform policy and programme development and implementation to accelerate achievement of the three transformative results and adapt to demographic changes, humanitarian crises and other megatrends; (d) broadening innovative collaboration and partnerships to enhance resource mobilization and advocate for adequate domestic and international financing for the implementation of the ICPD agenda; (e) facilitating regional knowledge-sharing by generating and scaling-up regional evidence and brokering access to technical resources; (f) facilitating the shift from funding to ‘funding and financing’ for the ICPD agenda and promoting SSTC and broad-

based partnerships at regional and national levels; (g) facilitating high-quality and tailored technical and programmatic advisory support to countries, partners and UNFPA country offices sourced from partnership, other UNFPA country and regional offices, UNFPA headquarters, and consultants; (h) providing oversight and support to country programme development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and guiding countries towards an efficient integration of humanitarian, development and peace-responsive programming.

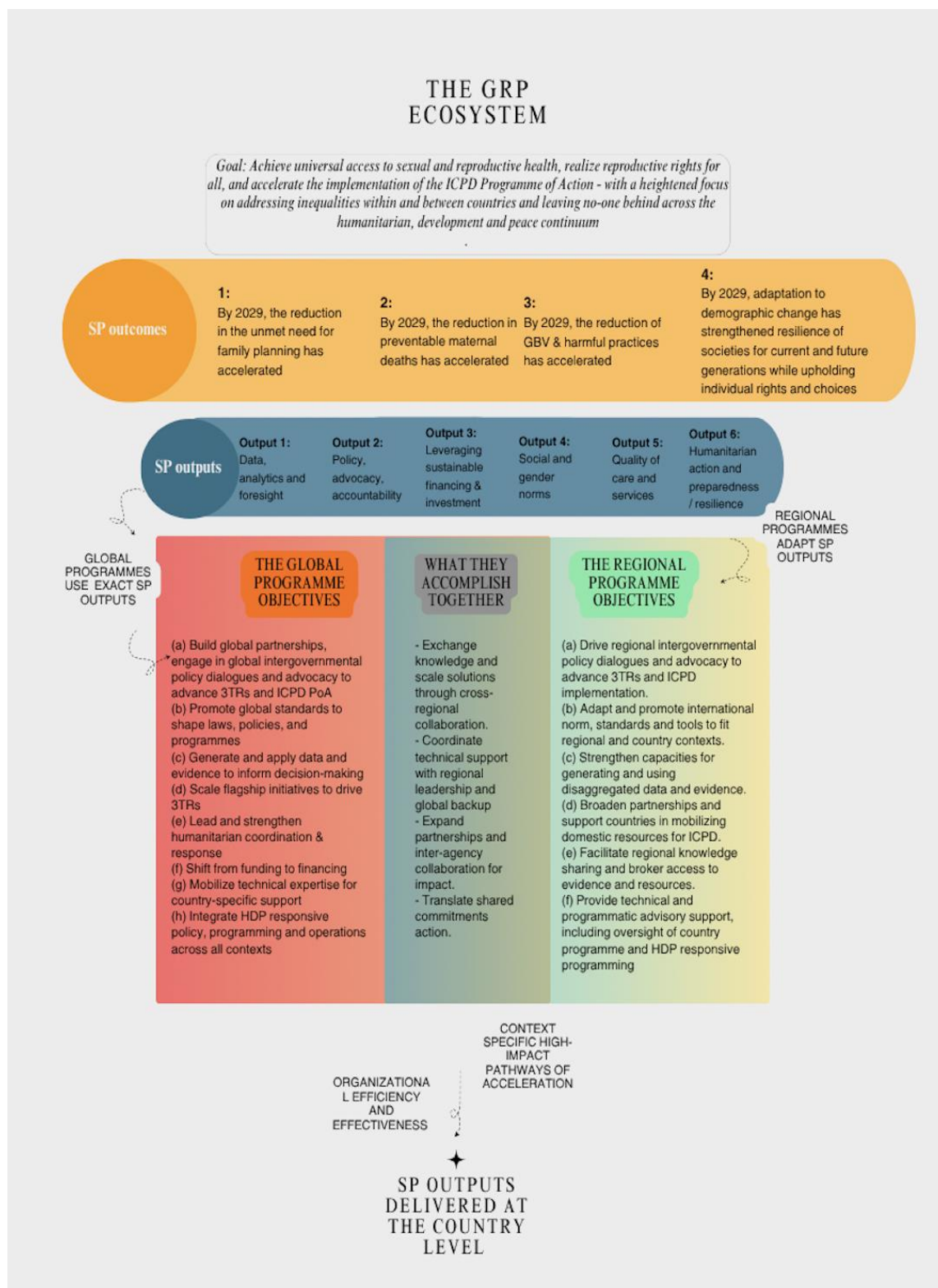
10. The global and regional programmes facilitate evidence generation, knowledge exchange and cross-regional collaboration to enhance partnerships, promote replicable innovations, promote the ethical use of cutting-edge technology tools, and support country offices in adapting and scaling up effective solutions to accelerate progress on the three transformative results across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum. The programmes also jointly facilitate the establishment of networks and ‘communities of practice’ and promote the regional and interregional flow of technical and programmatic support. In providing such technical and programmatic support to countries and partners, the regional offices will offer primary assistance; the global programme will step in, as necessary, to provide assistance coordinated by the regional offices. In response to the evolving operational realities and constrained financial resources, the global and regional programmes will increasingly explore alternatives to traditional mission-based technical and programme support, including virtual platforms, to facilitate continuous learning, peer exchange and remote technical assistance. To enhance efficiency and effectiveness, the global and regional programmes will implement a redesigned corporate mechanism for an integrated programme-technical support, leveraging an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered knowledge management system and a technical resources portal.

11. The global and regional programmes for 2026-2029 contribute directly to the strategic plan results through their respective results and resources frameworks, which are aligned with the integrated results and resources framework of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2026-2029.

12. The global and regional programmes are designed to ensure delivery of the UNFPA strategic plan outcomes and outputs. The global programme uses the same outputs as the UNFPA strategic plan, 2026-2029. The regional programmes tailor the outputs of their programmes to the needs and priorities of each region, while closely aligning them to the strategic plan outcomes.

13. The programme design takes into consideration a set of integrated and forward-looking programme approaches, which are context-specific and collectively advance SRHRR, promote gender equality and support rights-based responses to demographic change to accelerate the results. In the context of a differentiated presence, UNFPA will adopt an outward-looking, integrated and knowledge-based operational model that will enable UNFPA teams to draw on technical and programme expertise well beyond its own resource base.

III. Focus of the global and regional programmes



14. The programmes are guided by key cross-cutting principles: (a) promoting and protecting human rights; (b) prioritizing ‘leaving no one behind’ and addressing inequalities; (c) promoting the centrality of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; (d) focusing on evidence-based and data-informed decision-making; (e) ensuring commitment to anti-discrimination and anti-racism; and (f) improving accountability, transparency and ethics.

15. To effectively deliver on its objectives, the global and regional programmes will: (a) embrace innovation and new partnerships, and deploy digital tools and platforms to expand programme reach and enhance its delivery; (b) prioritize actionable pathways to scale up proven interventions; (c) facilitate co-creation and knowledge exchange by systematically generating and sharing evidence and knowledge including through AI-powered tools, and; (e) adopt a holistic approach that enhances systemic resilience, ensure integrated humanitarian, development and peace-responsive programming and addresses the unique needs and vulnerabilities of affected populations.

16. The global and regional programmes for 2026-2029 will enhance the impact of UNFPA by establishing thematic knowledge hubs, redesigning corporate mechanisms for integrated support, promoting innovation, and enabling flexible, cross-regional collaboration through digital platforms and AI-driven knowledge systems. They will promote SSTC modalities to ensure an innovative and cost-effective programming strategy to deliver the strategic plan outcomes. They will leverage UNFPA technical expertise across all levels, connect the ICPD agenda to emerging issues, promote international standards on SRHRR, gender equality and population dynamics, and strengthen efforts to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment. Amid the financing constraints and to ensure the sustainability of progress, the programmes will advocate for stronger national commitments, support sustainable financing and provide cost-effective, integrated solutions to scale up proven interventions and results.

A. The global programme

17. The global programme will expand collaboration with both traditional and non-traditional partners. By strengthening advocacy and policy dialogue beyond conventional spaces and identifying alternative avenues for engagement and leveraging resources, the programme will help galvanize renewed political support and national resources. This will enhance implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, ensuring broad-based stakeholder support and alignment with national development priorities.

18. The global programme will lead and contribute to the development and dissemination of technical guidance, tools, international norms and standards that promote SRHRR and human rights, gender equality, adolescents and youth empowerment, adaptation and resilience to demographic change and megatrends, ensuring that no one is left behind in achieving the Strategic Plan outcomes. The programme will provide guidance to ensure integrated humanitarian, development and peace-responsive programming that prioritizes the agency, needs and rights of women and adolescents and youth. It will facilitate SSTC across development and humanitarian contexts, leveraging SSTC to strengthen programme delivery. Additionally, the global programme

will drive efforts to identify solutions and guide action on sustainable financing for the ICPD agenda and the three transformative results, in line with the UNFPA strategy on financing for ICPD.

19. The global programme for 2026-2029 will accelerate progress on the four strategic plan outcomes by broadening partnerships beyond traditional actors and leveraging the convening power of UNFPA. It will deepen engagement with financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, youth-led and women-led organizations and networks, feminist coalitions, faith-based groups and social movements by promoting meaningful participation in global decision-making processes.

20. The global programme will drive the strategic positioning of the ICPD agenda and the four strategic plan outcomes across intergovernmental, inter-agency, and multilateral platforms. Anchored in human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches, it will prioritize reaching those left furthest behind, while reinforcing national and regional efforts. Active engagement in United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) mechanisms will ensure coherence and elevate UNFPA contributions within the United Nations system.

21. The global programme will position UNFPA as a leader in population data by promoting international standards, strengthening national data systems and foresight and promoting evidence-based policymaking across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum. It will provide technical leadership on demographic methods and tools to help countries anticipate and respond to demographic change, plan for future needs and adapt systems, including for health and social protection, to effectively respond to population needs and invest in human capital. Through an integrated global technical support mechanism, the programme will enhance national and regional capacities in demographic analysis, supporting timely, rights-based responses to megatrends, crises and long-term development challenges.

22. The global programme will further strengthen the humanitarian leadership of UNFPA in SRHRR and GBV and operational readiness across the organization and its partners, prioritizing scaled-up, lifesaving interventions on SRHRR and GBV and harmful practices. It will ensure a coordinated emergency preparedness and response through close collaboration with regional and country offices, and alignment with other United Nations entities, NGOs and Member States to integrate SRH and GBV into an inclusive humanitarian action.

23. The global programme will support inter-agency efforts to help United Nations country teams deliver on the SDGs, aligning the ICPD Programme of Action with the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind and reach those left furthest behind first in achieving the results. It will bridge humanitarian, development and peace-responsive work, especially in high-risk settings, by promoting 'whole-of-system' responses and collective outcomes. It will foster cross-regional learning and accelerate progress toward achieving the four strategic plan outcomes.

24. The priorities of the global programme are outlined in a dedicated programme document, which includes a results and resources framework to guide implementation and track performance.

B. The regional programmes

25. The regional programmes, 2026-2029, are designed to accelerate the achievement of the three transformative results and to adapt to the demographic changes in each region by leveraging the convening power of UNFPA, fostering innovation and building partnerships within innovation ecosystems. These programmes will establish platforms, such as centres of excellence, to facilitate experience-sharing among countries with similar contexts. They will promote regional and cross-regional leadership through SSTC and support countries in documenting, disseminating and sharing their successful experiences, skills and technologies.

26. In an increasingly complex and polarized global environment, regional programmes will strategically expand and diversify partnerships, including with women-led and youth-led organizations and movements. By fostering inclusive coalitions around shared priorities, regional programmes will amplify collective influence, navigate geopolitical shifts and strengthen advocacy for the four strategic plan outcomes across diverse contexts. This includes forging alliances beyond traditional actors – engaging emerging regional powers, multilateral platforms, the philanthropic and corporate sectors, and influential social movements.

27. To effectively address region-specific challenges related to the outcomes of the strategic plan, each regional programme will embrace integrated approaches across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum, addressing diverse needs from countries and ensuring that the ICPD Programme of Action is positioned at regional, subregional and country levels.

28. To translate global and regional commitments into national action, the regional programmes will promote regional norms, adapt standards and tools and provide tailored technical and programme support for localizing and implementing the ICPD Programme of Action at country level. They will build the capacity of governments, partners and countries to address demographic shifts, crises and megatrends, and will adapt methodologies and evidence to specific contexts for a more effective response and implementation.

29. Regional programmes will strengthen cross-country and cross-regional collaboration through knowledge exchange and replication of good practices. They will strengthen data systems, generate and disseminate regional evidence and provide technical support. They will analyse regional patterns, trends and needs, and be at the forefront of developing human rights-based solutions and partnership with governments and partners. The evolving business model of UNFPA will be increasingly agile, flexible, integrated, outward-looking, knowledge-based and accountable.

30. Regional programmes will mainstream innovation across programming and systems, with a focus on harnessing AI, digital platforms and emerging technologies to accelerate results. AI-powered tools will be leveraged to improve data analytics, strengthen service delivery and inform real-time decision-making.

31. To advance regional action, United Nations reform and inter-agency collaboration, regional programmes will expand partnerships through issue-based coalitions, joint programming, partnership with regional platforms, including regional economic communities and cooperation mechanisms and collective impact initiatives. They will also enhance preparedness and humanitarian coordination, offering the first line of support to country offices at the onset of crises, and advocate for the integration of GBV prevention and response, the compact for young people in

humanitarian action and the implementation of the minimum initial service package in all humanitarian efforts.

IV. Management and governance mechanisms

32. The UNFPA Executive Director has the final accountability for delivery of the results of global and regional programmes. Within the organization, an executive committee, led by the Executive Director, is designated as the decision-making body. A secretariat for global and regional programmes, hosted within the Programme Division, provides overall coordination and management of global and regional programme implementation through a mechanism of focal points representing the six regions and the headquarters units.

33. The global and regional programmes undergo review and systematic reporting on progress to the Executive Committee, to more effectively monitor progress and, if needed, decide on adjustments.

34. To ensure the flexibility to respond to the changing development and humanitarian landscape, depending on the resources available, UNFPA will make adjustments to allocations for global and regional programmes annually, while ensuring that the overall ceilings approved by the Executive Board are not exceeded.

35. The directors of the relevant headquarters divisions and regional offices are responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the global programme and respective regional programmes, ensuring alignment with the UNFPA mandate, the strategic plan, 2026-2029, and internal accountability frameworks.

36. The Executive Board will continue to play a key role in providing guidance and oversight for UNFPA management to ensure the organization makes optimum use of its resources toward the achievement of its mission.
