



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

Informal consultation

27 January 2026



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
- **Effectiveness** and **coverage** of UNFPA's humanitarian interventions
- **Efficiency** of UNFPA's internal systems, processes, policies and procedures for humanitarian action around SRHR, GBV, coordination and humanitarian supplies
- **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 humanitarian, development, peace continuum approach

Scope

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

Asia and the Pacific	Bangladesh	Myanmar
Arab States	Egypt	Somalia, Syria
Eastern Europe and Cental 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.*

Approach

Desk review of UNFPA/external documentation and data

- 1500+ documents/datasets reviewed

Key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions

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

	Women/ Girls	Men/ boys	Total persons	Total KII/FGD
Global level (KIIs)	11	11	22	20
Regional level (KIIs)	19	9	38	23
Country level (KIIs)	185	165	350	183
Country level (FGDs)	176	24	200	23
Total	391	209	600	249

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 progress in supporting the delivery and coordination of increasingly high-quality SRH and GBV services. It has successfully implemented key service models and there is notable progress in youth engagement and leadership.

However, the scale of the need and growing limitations on available resources puts adequate coverage for vulnerable populations further out of reach.

3

Use 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 cash and voucher assistance.

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 such as Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (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.
2. Reinforce capacity for robust advocacy and leadership among senior management in inter-agency forums, particularly in resource negotiations.
3. Advocate internally to formalize this strategic framework to operationalize humanitarian commitments in UNFPA's 2026-2029 strategic plan.

Additional actions for consideration

1. Replicate the regional Humanitarian Roadmap created in West and Central Africa in other regions as an alternative to a global strategy and ensure alignment with the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

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.
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.
3. Support an orderly transition to new interagency coordination modalities for GBV while maintaining UNFPA's global, regional, and national GBV role and expertise during and after the transition.

Additional actions for consideration

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

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.
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.
3. Review the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the Surge and GERT rapid deployment mechanisms.
4. Assess, identify, and target strategic investments in prepositioning humanitarian supplies at all levels, tailored to the most significant risks and needs.
5. Increase the proportion of core funding allocated to dedicated humanitarian positions at country and regional levels to provide stability and continuity.
6. Assess and streamline recruitment processes for humanitarian positions, using mechanisms like pre-vetted national rosters and adopting the "time-to-fill" metric.

Additional actions for consideration

1. Adopt an agile, online, centralized knowledge management system for HRD policies and guidance.
2. Decentralize approval for local procurement of selected pharmaceuticals and provide Cash and Voucher Assistance for medication purchases.

4 Enhance accountability to affected populations and localization efforts

Operationalization actions

1. Systematically integrate consistent accountability to affected populations mechanisms (e.g., feedback loops, community consultations) into every stage of the humanitarian programme cycle and partner agreements.
2. Leverage innovative technologies, like mobile platforms, for community feedback and needs assessments where appropriate.
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.

Additional actions for consideration

1. Enhance work with governments to transition humanitarian responses to national ownership and funding where appropriate.
2. Assign dedicated budget lines for organizational strengthening and overheads for partners, so they can participate on an equal footing.

5

Integrate and strengthen humanitarian, development, peace continuum work, including climate adaptation and youth, peace and security

Operationalization actions

1. Clarify responsibilities and foster collaboration between the Humanitarian Response and Programme Divisions, including potentially modifying corporate structures to break down silos.
2. Finalize and widely disseminate a comprehensive corporate framework and practical guidance on the humanitarian-development-peace continuum.
3. Develop a dedicated framework and guidance for humanitarian actions on climate adaptation as part of disaster risk reduction, including in early warning systems, anticipatory action, and resilience-building.

Additional actions for consideration

1. Ensure that humanitarian needs assessments and response plans consistently include specific, integrated programming for young people.
2. Leverage UNFPA's leadership in the youth, peace and security agenda and youth compact to strengthen partnerships with youth-led organizations in humanitarian settings.

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.
2. Develop and implement meaningful, standardized, outcome-oriented indicators for SRHR and GBV programming, moving beyond activity and output-level data.
3. Streamline humanitarian reporting requirements to reduce administrative burdens and reorient efforts toward genuine monitoring and organizational learning.

Additional actions for consideration

1. Develop and implement a clear, unified humanitarian data strategy based on a single architecture, leveraging existing platforms like DHIS2 and GBV Information Management System.
2. Strengthen internal capacity for humanitarian data management, analysis, and visualization through dedicated staffing and mandatory "data literacy" training for all staff.
3. Systematically leverage UNFPA's expertise and relationships with National Statistical Offices to integrate population data into humanitarian planning.

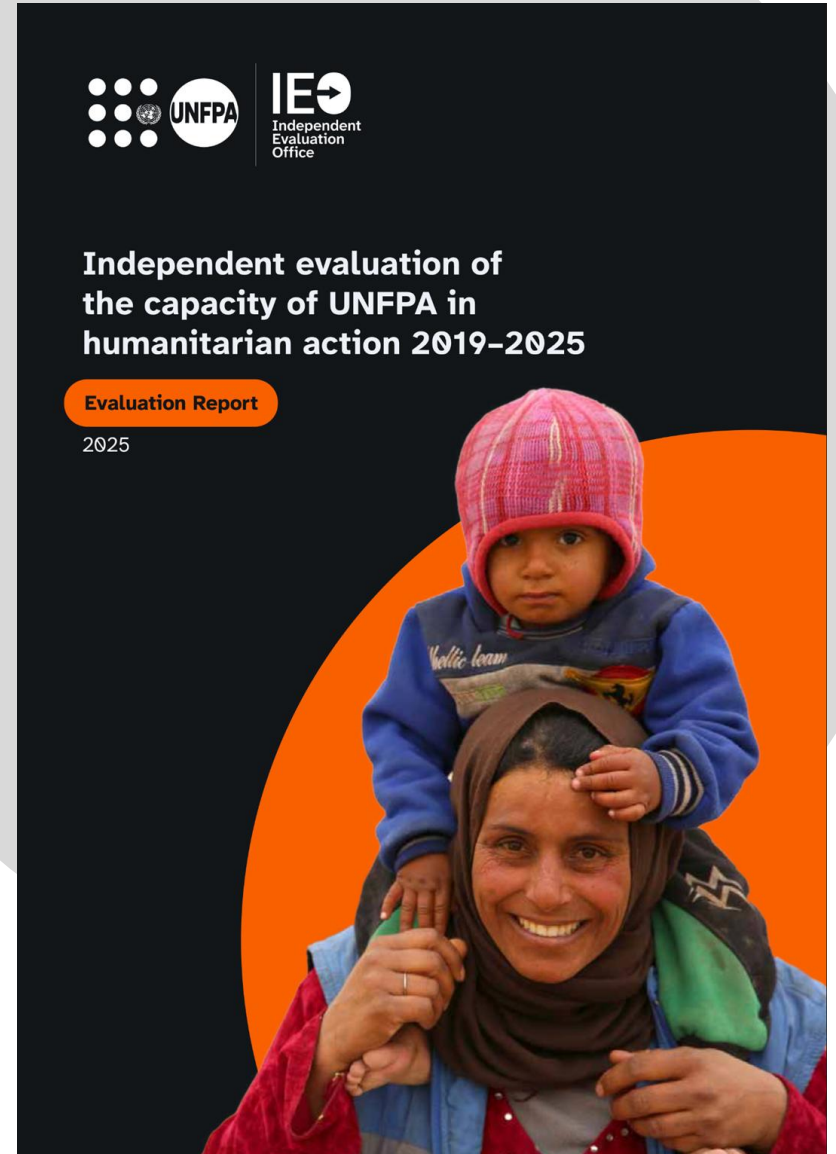
#HumanitarianEval

This evaluation and related products are available at
<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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