



**Annex 2.**  
**UNFPA humanitarian update, 2023**

Report of the Executive Director

Progress in implementing the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025

*Summary*

This annex provides a brief overview of the results UNFPA achieved in 2023 in responding to humanitarian crises.



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Photo: A woman displaced from Khartoum to White Nile receives reproductive health services at a UNFPA-supported mobile clinic.

By the end of 2023, Sudan was facing the largest internal displacement crisis globally, affecting around 9 million people. The ongoing conflict continues to have a devastating impact on the civilian population, leaving almost 25 million people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance.

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## I. Overview

1. In 2023, the UN and partner organizations targeted 245 million people in need through 36 country plans and nine regional plans, reflecting a 7 per cent increase in the original number of people targeted for assistance at the beginning of 2023. This growth was primarily driven by crises in Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and natural disasters in Libya, Malawi, Mozambique, Syria, and Türkiye. Of those targeted by country-level plans, 128 million people (62 per cent) benefited from some form of aid during the year.<sup>1</sup>

2. As these crises unfolded, women in affected regions continued to require access to maternal health and family planning services, while women and girls remained vulnerable to violence, including rape, requiring safety, medical, and psychosocial support.

3. UNFPA faced funding challenges with only 50% of humanitarian assistance funded in 2023 (approximately \$555 million out of a \$1.1 billion requirement). This resulted in falling short of reaching the targeted 66 million women, girls, and young people. Nonetheless, significant results were achieved in areas where assistance reached the target populations (refer to results snapshot section below). Key **humanitarian trends in 2023** that underscored the unique challenges faced by women and girls in humanitarian situations include displacement, climate change, forgotten crises, and access impediments. **Displacement** impacts millions globally, with over half being women and girls who are particularly vulnerable to fleeing conflict. More people are displaced now than at any other time since the beginning of the century. Worldwide, more than 1 in 73 people<sup>2</sup> are forcibly displaced, a ratio which has almost doubled in the past ten years. **Conflict and climate disasters** remained the main factors driving displacement. **Forgotten crises**, such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti, often lacked sufficient attention and resources for humanitarian responses, disproportionately affecting women's access to reproductive health and GBV services. Climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, resulting in decreased life expectancy, heightened risks of exploitation, and increased vulnerability to gender-based violence. **Access** challenges, including conflicts and bureaucratic hurdles, further impeding aid delivery, with women and girls often bearing the brunt of these barriers due to structural inequalities.

4. No woman should die while giving life or live in fear of gender-based violence. Every woman and every girl has the right to receive dignified assistance in humanitarian crises. These principles underpin everything UNFPA does, everywhere we work, no matter how dire the circumstances.

## II. Results snapshot

5. UNFPA's **rapid response efforts in 50 crisis-affected countries in 2023** led to over 10 million people accessing essential sexual and reproductive health services, including for clean and safe delivery, prenatal care, emergency obstetric and newborn care, postnatal care, clinical management of rape, treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and family planning. From Haiti to Ukraine to Yemen and beyond, over 3,600 health facilities were supported to provide life-saving care. More than 4.2 million people found safety and protection from gender-based violence. Women and girls sought physical and emotional refuge in 1,700 safe spaces.

6. UNFPA supported the deployment of hundreds of trained midwives to drought-affected parts of **Ethiopia** and helped women such as Amino, 25, who delivered safely and successfully for the first time after three previous pregnancies ended in heartbreak. She called the safe birth of her baby “a miracle”. In **Afghanistan**, community midwives working through UNFPA-supported 360 family health houses are the only health-care providers in remote regions.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, Global Achievements in 2023. Website: <https://humanitarianaction.info/document/global-humanitarian-overview-2024/article/global-achievements-1>

<sup>2</sup>Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, publication overview. Website: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfrsp>

7. In **Sudan**, UNFPA's provision of life-saving medicines addressed obstetric haemorrhage, a leading cause of maternal mortality. In **Gaza**, where women give birth under appalling conditions each day, UNFPA distributed reproductive health kits for emergency obstetric and neonatal care. In **Chad**, with UNFPA's support, "one-stop" centers offered comprehensive care and support to survivors of gender-based violence among refugees.

8. UNFPA's **emergency preparedness** was increasingly integrated into regular operations, utilizing anticipatory action and prepositioning supplies for efficient response.

Results Snapshot	
Sexual and Reproductive Health	
10.6 million	Total number of people reached with UNFPA-supported sexual and reproductive health services in 50 countries
2.7 million	People reached with family planning information and services in UNFPA-supported facilities in 44 countries.
2.2 million	Adolescents and youth (ages 10 to 24) reached with adolescent sexual and reproductive health information and services in 46 countries
956,000	Assisted safe deliveries in UNFPA-assisted facilities in 39 countries
25,000	People reached with cash and voucher assistance in 12 countries
11,900	Personnel trained on MISRP for sexual and reproductive health in 39 countries
3,648	Health facilities supported by UNFPA in 48 countries
808	Mobile clinics supported by UNFPA in 36 countries
Gender-Based Violence	
4.2 million	Total number of people reached with gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response services in 50 countries
925,300	Dignity kits distributed in 48 countries
33,000	Women reached with humanitarian cash and voucher assistance for GBV case management and/or other response and risk mitigation measures in 23 countries
30,200	Non-specialized humanitarian workers or front-line workers trained/oriented on core concepts and guidelines related to gender-based violence in 51 countries
1,690	Safe spaces for women and girls supported by UNFPA in 46 countries
939	Youth-friendly spaces for recreation, vocational training and community outreach in 29 countries

9. Support for **local and women-led organizations**, along with community-based programming and cash and vouchers, are critical strategies for UNFPA in delivering essential services and providing some hope to affected people. Localization also includes a systematized approach to ensuring accountability to affected people, including their protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. In its strategic plan, UNFPA committed to providing up to 4 per cent of its humanitarian funding to local and national organizations by 2025. In 2023, interim figures indicate that 37 per cent of humanitarian allocations went to local and national partners, with a 15 per cent share going to women-led organizations.
10. Faced with escalating needs and constrained resources, UNFPA continued to **improve its targeting data and strategic focus** at a country level; closely collaborating with the broader humanitarian system and aligning with the OCHA-led protection and health clusters.
11. Further efforts entail the ongoing overhaul of the organizational **Emergency Procedures** to ensure a standardized approach to emergency response across countries, regions, and headquarters. UNFPA initiated this work in 2023, aiming to define corporate approaches to Emergency Preparedness in low and high-risk environments, serving as an enabler for effective and efficient emergency response. This includes updating corporate minimum preparedness actions and laying the groundwork for Advanced Preparedness Actions in high-risk environments.

### III. Humanitarian priorities

#### 12. Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

- a- **Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility:** Since 2017 and under the mandate of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UNFPA has led the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility, the global forum for coordinating prevention, risk mitigation, and response efforts within the Global Protection Cluster. This role involves bringing together international and national organizations, including women-led and women's rights organizations, to ensure survivor-centred, multisectoral responses to gender-based violence (GBV). In 2023, UNFPA coordinated over 2,100 members, half of which were local organizations and 20 per cent of which were women-led organizations. Support provided to GBV coordination teams in crises included those in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, and Sudan, addressing urgent needs in over 40 contexts throughout the year.
- b- **Localization:** UNFPA prioritizes working with local actors, particularly women-led and youth-led organizations, to deliver accountable and inclusive humanitarian action. This approach enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of responses, especially in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Leveraging its extensive experience in partnering with local actors across humanitarian and development contexts, UNFPA prioritizes capacity-building among local partners and supports their leadership roles within humanitarian coordination frameworks.

#### 13. Humanitarian Programme

- a- **Availability of Services for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender-Based Violence Protection:** UNFPA is dedicated to ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and addressing gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. This includes implementing the **minimum initial services package (MISP)** for reproductive health, aimed at reducing maternal and newborn mortality, preventing unintended pregnancies, and providing care for survivors of sexual violence. UNFPA integrates sexual and reproductive health throughout all phases of humanitarian responses and enhances coordination efforts to strengthen the links between these services.
- b- **Gender-Based Violence Protection:** The heightened frequency and severity of humanitarian emergencies elevate the risks of gender-based violence. In response, UNFPA launched a Strategy and Operational Plan to Scale Up and Strengthen Interventions on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (2023-2025). This strategy is designed to provide prompt and high-quality services to survivors, mitigate the long-term impacts of violence, and ensure consistent support delivery.

- c- **Humanitarian Sexual and Reproductive Health Supplies and Non-food Items:** UNFPA plays a critical role in providing lifesaving Inter-Agency Emergency Health Kits (IARH) on behalf of the international community. These kits, ranging from comprehensive emergency obstetric care (the largest) to clean delivery kits (the smallest), are indispensable for safeguarding maternal and newborn health in crises. UNFPA ensures the availability of critical infrastructure such as prefabricated mobile medical clinics and ambulances. In 2023, for the first time, UNFPA established Global Stock Prepositioning of \$5 million for lifesaving operational items and security equipment. Furthermore, UNFPA increased the IARH revolving fund from \$10 million to \$15 million for global stockpiling, marking a 50% increase in 2023.
- d- **Preparedness and Anticipatory Action:** UNFPA emphasizes prevention through early intervention and anticipatory action in emergencies. This approach focuses on preventing gender-based violence, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services, and providing cash assistance to empower women and protect their safety and livelihoods. Early intervention through emergency preparedness and anticipatory action has also demonstrated effectiveness in reducing disaster-related losses and mitigating the financial burdens associated with emergency responses.
- e- **Cash and Voucher Assistance:** UNFPA continues to expand the use of cash and voucher assistance to address sexual and reproductive health needs and gender-based violence among women and girls in emergencies. This approach lowers financial barriers to essential services and promotes health-seeking behaviours, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence. In 2023, UNFPA country offices disbursed \$10.6 million to women, girls, and other key populations in 25 countries, with 73% of this assistance distributed through local partners.

#### 14. Humanitarian Operations

- a- **Strengthened Emergency Response:** In 2023, UNFPA established a Global Emergency Response Team composed of humanitarian experts in emergency response, GBV, sexual and reproductive health, supply chain and logistics, access, and communications. This team rapidly deploys to address humanitarian crises, supporting UNFPA Surge, another mechanism that facilitates swift and coordinated responses. In 2023, UNFPA deployed its highest number of surge personnel, almost 200 experts.
- b- **Central Data Platform:** In 2023, UNFPA established a central data platform to enhance programme monitoring and surveillance in humanitarian settings. It will enable UNFPA's Implementing Partners to capture service data by location, improving data quality, frequency, and timeliness. Standardized core indicators and metadata will facilitate evidence-based decision-making and ensure a faster, adapted, and consistent humanitarian response. These objectives align with UNFPA's commitments to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid through quality and timely data for improved prioritization and targeting.
- c- **Humanitarian Financing:** UNFPA's Humanitarian Thematic Fund (HTF) and Emergency Fund (internal funding mechanism) are vital in facilitating rapid and flexible emergency response. The HTF, supported by voluntary contributions, is UNFPA's most flexible humanitarian funding mechanism. It provides timely, strategic, and multi-year financing to ongoing humanitarian responses, as well as preparedness while strengthening links between humanitarian action and longer-term development initiatives. Notably, all contributions to the HTF serve the needs of women and girls, with 60 per cent of the funding reaching local and national organizations. Since its inception in 2019, where it received \$5.9 million in total contributions, the HTF has seen substantial growth, accumulating over \$122 million in revenue between 2019, its first year of full operations, and 2023. The years 2020 and 2022 experienced the highest revenue, with \$30.8 million and \$45.8 million respectively, attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war. This remarkable increase has been facilitated by contributions from nearly 20 partners. In 2023, the HTF supported 33 UNFPA country and regional offices with over \$40 million.

#### **IV. Looking ahead**

15. UNFPA's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 further institutionalized humanitarian leadership, incorporating a specific "humanitarian output" for the first time. This inclusion demonstrates increased accountability in delivering the humanitarian mandate and monitoring progress compared to previous strategic plans.
  16. As global humanitarian needs escalate, UNFPA will remain adaptable, innovative, and transformative in its approach to humanitarian leadership. The upcoming Strategic Plan, the final one before 2030, will present an opportunity to set ambitious goals and vision for its humanitarian mandate.
  17. Moving forward, UNFPA's humanitarian efforts will focus on prevention, strengthening operational capacity, localizing responses, ensuring predictable and sustainable financing, and leading GBV and SRH initiatives at local, regional, and global levels.
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