

UNFPA contribution
Report of the Secretary General report on the Implementation of the
Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

UNFPA has been requested to outline the progress made in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for eradicating poverty in accordance with its mandate and highlight:

- key activities, assessment of results and impact, gaps and challenges, including the health and socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, response, and key policy messages and recommendations.
- efforts made to foster greater inter-agency convergence and collaboration in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue, facilitating synergies, mobilizing funds, providing technical assistance in the key areas of policy focus contained in the system-wide plan of action.

Of the seven thematic policy areas highlighted in the plan of action for the third decade, the following thematic areas were identified as key areas for UNFPA's interventions.

Thematic Area 1: Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing global scenario

- UNFPA supports Member States of the African Union to implement the Demographic Dividend Roadmap. To this end, UNFPA joined forces with the African Union and Germany in the organization of recurrent **Demographic Dividend and Diversity Dialogues**. The dialogues assist countries to assess key variables for the realization of a demographic dividend at the sub-national level (small area estimation). Key actions shared by Member States at the dialogues include public communication of aggregated national level data on key variables of the demographic dividend which is outlined in a Demographic Dividend Atlas. This intervention creates opportunities for Member States to share progress related to the design and implementation of evidence-based policy interventions, particularly geared towards women and youth in order to realise respective development trajectories.

Recommendation: *Member States should continue to invest in and ramp up actions to integrate population dynamics into national development plans and strengthen statistical systems to facilitate evidence-based decision making.*

Thematic Area 2: Social protection

- **UNFPA supports the global roll-out of National Transfer Accounts (NTAs) and National Time Transfer Accounts (NTTAs)**, which help to assess the social and economic implications of changes in population age structures. These accounts are the most rigorous tool to date to assess the linkages between demographics and economic growth and demonstrate fiscal implications on public and private budgets as governments design essential social protection systems, including pensions and health care coverage.
- In its response to COVID-19, **UNFPA prioritized those countries where national health systems are under significant pressures**. These include countries and areas where there is an ongoing humanitarian emergency and in fragile settings, as well as LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. For example, in Vanuatu, UNFPA, in collaboration with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), was amongst the first to respond to Tropical Cyclone Harold, delivering 1000 dignity kits to women in the areas most affected by the disaster, while adhering to social distancing orders related to COVID-19.

Recommendation: *The United Nations system, through a One-UN approach, should provide assistance to Member States, upon request, in order to strengthen and integrate health systems as a matter of urgency in order to avoid significant socio-economic costs of inaction. COVID-19 has demonstrated that resilient health systems are critical to global health emergency preparedness and recovery.*

Member States and the United Nations system should continue to focus on interventions which address the needs of those furthest behind. In particular, it is imperative to respond to the needs of women and girls who have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, as sexual and reproductive health services have been interrupted, gender-based violence has skyrocketed, the need for mental health and psychosocial support has substantively increased, and the gender poverty gap has widened (projections indicate a 9.1 per cent increase in poverty rates for women by 2021 – a sharp contrast with the 2.7 per cent decrease forecasted before COVID)

Thematic Area 3: Human capability development: addressing the non-income forms of poverty

- UNFPA worked to underscore the importance of key issues of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, including sexual and reproductive health and rights within the global health discourse and frameworks, including Primary Health Care, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Global Action Plan on the SDG3, in order to facilitate policy dialogue, programming and results at country level. In 2020, UNFPA contributed to the UN Secretary-General's policy brief on COVID-19 and UHC where the importance of SRH services as essential services during crises was highlighted as an essential component to the response to and recovery from the pandemic. UNFPA supported countries to ensure the continuity of SRH services during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on strengthening health workforce capacity to implement infection prevention protocols; procuring and delivering essential supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers; ensuring access to and provision of quality sexual, reproductive, maternal health and gender-based violence services; and supporting communication and community engagement on protective measures.
- During the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 jointly convened by UNFPA and the Governments of Denmark and Kenya from 12 to 14 November 2019 to mark the 25th anniversary of the ICPD, UNFPA presented the key components of a comprehensive life course approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Several countries indicated their willingness to move towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights as an essential part of universal health coverage. In 2020, UNFPA together with the Human Reproductive Programme of the World Health Organization, (WHO) collaborated to develop an online handbook for the progressive realization of SRHR in UHC which will feature country case studies for south to south learning and collaboration.
- Partnerships helped to increase the utilization of integrated sexual and reproductive health services:
 - In 2019, UNFPA became a host of the secretariat of the **Every Woman, Every Child, Every Adolescent partnership**; the movement has mobilized and intensified international and national action by governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and civil society to address the major health challenges encountered by women, children and adolescents around the world. In 2020, upon the directive by the UN Secretary-General to ensure that the partnership becomes more country focused, support to Member States to achieve goals of the of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women, Children and Adolescents Health will be provided through the [SDG3 Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All facility](#), the respective UNCTs and the UN agencies on Health (the H6 partnership).
 - The **H6 partnership**, of which UNFPA is a member, has multi-stakeholder platforms in 43 developing countries, and continues to strengthen its mandate and One UN vision including active participation in UN reform especially for planning and delivering together at country level.
 - **UNFPA, co-chair, with WHO has also revitalized the Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality Partnership (EPMH)**. In 2020, the Metrics Group was established and new milestones and targets set to be achieved by 2025, including for SDG target 5.6.1; a country implementation group (CIG) with government counterparts have identified milestones to strengthen the delivery on quality and access on the ground in 20 countries.

Recommendation: *Member States should take actions needed in order to ensure access to universal health coverage, through relevant partnerships and with support from development partners.*

Thematic Area 5: Reducing inequalities

- As part of an inter-agency task team, UNFPA contributed to the **UN Sustainable Development Group Guidance on Leaving no one behind (LNOB)** in 2019. In 2020, UNFPA undertook a comprehensive LNOB assessment of UNFPA's performance and based on the findings, developed an Operational Plan on Reaching the Furthest Behind, which aims to address the organizational factors required to accelerate action on LNOB as part of the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The Operational Plan identifies points of intervention, advocacy, and support within the organization through which a positive difference can be made to reaching the furthest behind in relation to UNFPA's mandate.
- In 2020, UNFPA published a new Guidance Note on Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming. The Guidance Note addresses the following:
 - UNFPAs response to the Secretary-General's 2020 "Call to Action for HR", which calls for human rights to permeate the work of all the UN system
 - It is built around three components for action: i) Equality & Non-discrimination, ii) Quality and iii) Accountability
- UNFPA, together with UNICEF and UN-Women launched its **factsheet on Indigenous women's maternal health**, as the first document to bring together all the available data on this issue, with concrete recommendations for how to address the disparities among indigenous and non-indigenous women's maternal health. UNFPA is the Co-Chair for the inter-agency group on

Indigenous Peoples for 2021 and 2022. In this role, UNFPA achieved the endorsement of the UN Wide Call to Action: Building an Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Future with Indigenous Peoples, by the UN's Chief Executive Board in November 2020.

- In 2020, via UNFPAs Maternal Health Thematic Fund, the organization [partnered with Philips](#) in the Republic of Congo to address the challenging issue of availability of data on indigenous peoples' access to obstetric care and to reduce maternal and new-born mortality rates by 50 per cent in the country's health facilities over the next five years, especially in remote areas. The joint **UNFPA and UNICEF programme to end child marriage** has been adapted for social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In countries where child, early or forced marriage is already common, economic shocks are often accompanied by rising incidence. UNFPA has estimated that child marriage will increase as a result of COVID-19 through the projected rise in extreme poverty, and numerous governments and partners are deploying strategies to sustain child marriage prevention despite the pandemic. Fifteen countries in East and Southern Africa have toll-free child helplines, and life skills courses. Ghana, Nepal and Uganda now provide those programmes through radio and phone delivery, and Mozambique is now distributing the life skills curriculum through television.¹
- UNFPA launched the [COVID-19 Population Vulnerability Dashboard](#) **interactive tool to provide United Nations agencies, governments and policymakers, public health and frontline workers, as well as the general public access to data on populations vulnerable to COVID-19** to improve and inform both preparedness and response. The dashboard highlights population vulnerabilities at the national and subnational levels and utilises data from the latest Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) census samples for 94 countries based on key indicators such as age, older persons living alone, and population density, among others. The dashboard includes daily updates on COVID-19 cases and deaths, and global data on health sector readiness.

Recommendation: Member States should consider investments in strengthening governance systems, including but not limited to developing and implementing laws; strengthening national statistical systems and investing in social protection systems in order to reduce inequalities.

Member States are urged to increase measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic and greater food insecurity on child marriage, gender-based violence and other harmful practices. Further, it is essential to increase programming to reduce obesity and overweight, or COVID-19-vulnerability will rise.

The United Nations system should support Member States to provide access to quality health care, continue to create enabling environments to ensure that young people have access to education that includes adaptive learning, life skills. Further, Member States should invest in innovative digital solutions critical to both recovery efforts and future resilience.

Thematic Area 6: Addressing climate change and intensification of natural hazards

- **UNFPA's work on climate resilience focuses on four areas**, all of which are fundamentally linked to COVID-19:
- **Investment in long-term health systems strengthening**, including resilience building across the continuum of care and life cycle that includes sexual and reproductive health, including family planning, as well as maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health, including during crises, pandemics and other emergency situations. An example is the programme "**Population Health and Environment**", which simultaneously improves access to sexual and reproductive health, supports empowerment of women and girls, and helps communities conserve biodiversity, manage natural resources and develop sustainable livelihoods;
- **Strengthening the climate resilience of health systems**. UNFPA utilises a multi-hazard approach to assessing and strengthening health systems, accounting for new disease vectors, pandemics, new burdens from emergencies, and increased population mobility due to migration and displacement.
- **Improving early warning and anticipatory action, particularly in health, food security and protection from GBV**. In 2020 in Bangladesh, for example, in anticipation of severe flooding in some parts of the country, UNFPA prepositioned supplies and humanitarian actors ahead of the occurrence. In that regard, humanitarian assistance for women and girls at risk of gender-based violence, with full COVID-19 safety protocols was provided. It should be noted that forecast based financing which enables anticipatory action for disaster mitigation would be further piloted in Nepal and the Philippines in 2021.
- **Improving the use of population, health and gender data for vulnerability assessment and response**. UNFPA has recently released a COVID-19 vulnerability dashboard referenced earlier, using high resolution population data. Integrating these data with climate threats creates

¹ UNFPA, UNICEF, Pivoting the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage to Respond to the Pandemic: Adapting to COVID-19 (September 2020).

opportunities to strengthen the data foundations for multi-hazard risk reduction and response. High-quality data should be disaggregated by location, gender, age, disability, and other demographic characteristics, with a view to closing the digital divide and leaving no one behind.

Recommendation: *Member States should continue to take actions to ensure that sexual and reproductive health services are integrated into national disaster risk response plans.*

Thematic Area 7: Fighting poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

- UNFPA is engaged in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for coordination of humanitarian assistance. **UNFPA contributed to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (G-HRP) and supported 63 countries in 2020.** During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA has prioritized the needs of women and adolescent girls in emergencies, including the need for maternal health care, as a human rights imperative.
- In line with its mandate and commitments to the **Grand Bargain—an agreement among many of the largest donors and aid providers that aims to get more resources directly into the hands of people in need** — UNFPA continued to scale up cash and voucher assistance as a mechanism to address poverty and encourage health-seeking behaviour and expand access to services, and continued to work closely with local organizations and civil society in that regard.
- UNFPA is committed to humanitarian interventions that pave the way for the longer-term objectives of advancing human rights and gender equality, building social cohesion, and sustaining peace, to the extent possible with focus is on strengthening the resilience of people, communities and systems, and fostering inclusivity through fair and equitable access to essential services such as sexual and reproductive health care.
- UNFPA invested in local capacities and human resources with the aim of effectively reducing risks and vulnerabilities across the development, humanitarian and peace spectrum, strengthening prevention efforts and aiming to reach those left furthest behind.

Recommendation:

- *Member States and development partners should invest in*
 - *Effective action to address the root causes of crises. A coherent response requires a multifaceted approach, which combines immediate emergency assistance to those most in need with investment in developing local capacities to prevent, respond to and recover from crises, and to sustain peace over the medium to long term.*
 - *Emergency preparedness, including prepositioning of supplies, and anticipatory action are crucial to successful efforts to prevent people sliding further in poverty which typically results in reduced spending on essential services such as health care.*
 - *Enhancing local capacities, human resources and to promote the meaningful engagement and leadership of women, young people and others, and to strengthen national systems to deliver health and protection services to all.*

Thematic Area 8: Strengthen capacity in countries for implementing the 2030 Agenda

- Under UNFPA's leadership, guidance on measurement of the **Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.6.1 on women's decision-making on SRHR was provided to all countries, and the first data on SDG 5.6.2 on laws and regulations that guarantee women's access to sexual and reproductive health care**, information and education were collected from 107 countries. Based on the quality and scale of data collection, SDG 5.6.2 was upgraded from tier III to tier II indicator by the IAEG for SDGs.

Recommendation: *United Nations entities should continue to support Member States, upon request, to accelerate actions necessary to achieve the SDGs, within the context of the Decade of Action.*
