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## ADDRESSING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Humanitarian crises are reproductive health disasters. In times of upheaval or natural calamities, pregnancy-related deaths and sexual violence soar. Reproductive health services—including prenatal care, assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care—often become unavailable. Young people become more vulnerable to HIV infection and sexual exploitation. And many women lose access to family planning services, exposing them to unwanted pregnancy in perilous conditions.

Within the coordinated United Nations inter-agency response to disasters, UNFPA takes the lead in providing supplies and services to protect reproductive health, paying particular attention to the special needs and strengths of women and young people. Priority areas include safe motherhood, prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, adolescent health, and combating gender-based violence. UNFPA also supports data collection, including censuses to provide detailed information for planning and rapid health assessments to allow for appropriate and efficient relief. UNFPA encourages the full participation of women and young people in rebuilding their societies.



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## A ROADMAP TO THE FUTURE

UNFPA's work is guided by the Programme of Action adopted by 179 governments at the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). At that historic meeting, delegates from all regions and cultures agreed that reproductive health is a basic human right and that individuals should be able to freely choose the number, timing and spacing of their children. They also affirmed that meeting the needs for education and health, including reproductive health care, is a prerequisite for sustainable development over the longer term.

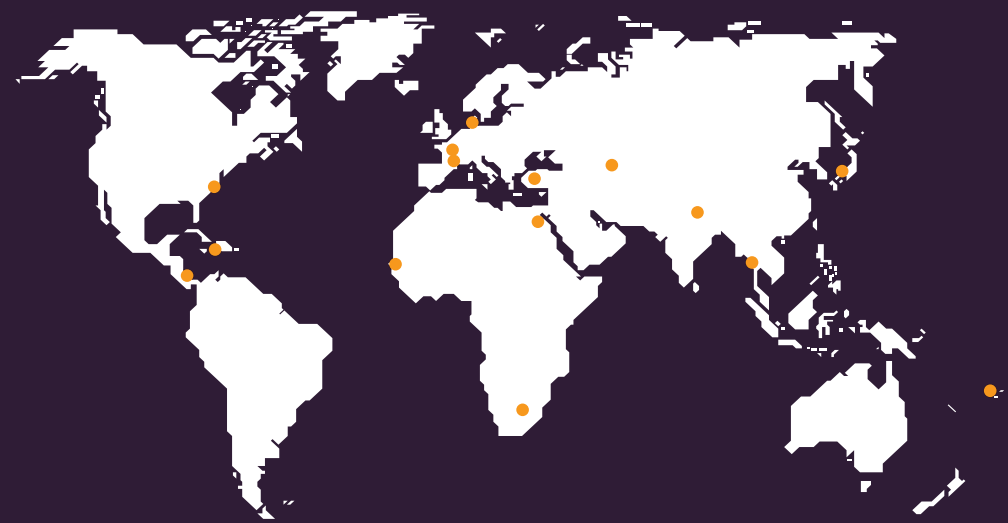
The ICPD objectives helped shape the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These eight goals, agreed to by world leaders in 2000, have the overarching aim of reducing extreme poverty by half by 2015. Significantly, the MDGs also include gender equality and the empowerment of women (Goal 3), which are fundamental principles of UNFPA's work.

### The ICPD roadmap for progress includes:

- Universal access to reproductive health by 2015*
- Universal primary education and closing the gender gap in education by 2015*
- Reducing maternal death by 75 per cent by 2015*
- Reducing infant death*
- Reducing HIV infection rates*

## GLOBAL REACH

UNFPA has 120 offices that serve 156 countries, territories and areas worldwide.



● UNFPA Regional, Subregional and Liaison offices



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**Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.**

### THIS IS THE WORLD UNFPA ENVISIONS

But we have more than a vision: We also have a plan. In 1994, at the International Conference on Population and Development, countries of the world agreed on a 20-year roadmap to make this vision a reality. The roadmap, which informs and is fully aligned with the Millennium Development Goals, asserts that the rights of individual women and men—and their ability to decide freely and responsibly the size of their families and the shape of their futures—are at the centre of sustainable development.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, which became operational in 1969, is the world's largest international source of funding for population and reproductive health programmes. We work with governments, at their request, through our country and regional offices, and we aim to build national capacity. We multiply our effectiveness by working in close coordination with other United Nations agencies and through partnerships with non-governmental organizations, faith-based groups, foundations, donors and the private sector.

### ENSURING THAT EVERY PREGNANCY IS WANTED...

The ability of individuals and couples to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children was proclaimed a basic human right four decades ago. Yet, access to safe and reliable family planning methods remains out of reach to some 222 million women, especially those who are poor. This unmet need makes it difficult for couples to plan their lives and secure their futures.

In 2007, universal access to reproductive health care, including family planning, was adopted as a benchmark for Millennium Development Goal 5 (improving maternal health), and UNFPA is a leader in helping countries achieve this goal. A key element of this is assisting countries in forecasting and supplying their needs for contraceptives, condoms and other reproductive health supplies.

### THAT EVERY BIRTH IS SAFE...

Every day, about 800 women die during pregnancy or childbirth. And for every woman who dies, as many as 20 others are seriously harmed by obstetric fistula or other childbearing injuries. The means to prevent such tragedies include voluntary family planning, skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetric care when needed. UNFPA's strategy embraces all three.

UNFPA helps women to enjoy the right to give birth safely. In 2007, it established a Thematic Fund for Maternal Health to help developing countries to provide quality care to women giving life. It helps countries to train birth attendants and other health workers, and to strengthen other aspects of public health systems, including emergency obstetric care and the provision of equipment. UNFPA also spearheads the global Campaign to End Fistula, an initiative to prevent this devastating childbirth injury and to restore the health and dignity of those who have been living with its effects.

### THE LINK BETWEEN POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Population dynamics—including growth rates, age structure, fertility, mortality, migration and more—influence every aspect of human, social and economic development. The other core areas of UNFPA's work, including reproductive health and women's empowerment, strongly influence population trends.

UNFPA works with governments and other decision makers to clarify the links between population and all other areas of development, to gather and analyse data and to ensure these issues are firmly reflected in national plans and policies. The Fund has helped dozens of countries plan and carry out censuses and build their own capacity to collect and use population data.

### WHERE EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S POTENTIAL IS FULFILLED

Addressing the aspirations and challenges facing the largest generation of youth in history—one out of every four persons is between the ages of 10 and 24—is a top priority for UNFPA. The large number of young people entering their most productive years can help launch economic, social and cultural transformation—if they are healthy, educated and provided with viable options in life. Reaching those who are married, out of school or marginalized by poverty is central to our mission.

Young people remain at the centre of the AIDS epidemic in terms of rates of infection, vulnerability, impact, and potential for change. Forty per cent of all new HIV infections worldwide are among young people, and young women are increasingly at risk. The world has agreed that young people have the human right to the information and means to protect themselves, but this commitment remains unfulfilled.

As one of 10 co-sponsors of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNFPA works to scale up HIV prevention efforts while addressing the gender inequalities that add fuel to the epidemic. UNFPA bases its work on evidence that shows that HIV can be contained through sustained and intensive programmes that emphasize prevention, including increased condom use, delayed sexual initiation, fewer sexual partners and reduced mother-to-child transmission. Linking responses to HIV with sexual and reproductive health is UNFPA's overall strategy for reaching more people cost-effectively and moving towards the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support.

*“Investing in women is not only the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do. I am deeply convinced that, in women, the world has at its disposal the most significant and yet largely untapped potential for development and peace.”*

Ban Ki-moon  
United Nations Secretary-General

### GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Women can and must play a key role in sustainable development and poverty eradication. When women are educated and healthy, their families, communities and countries benefit. Yet, discrimination and violence against women and girls pervade almost every aspect of life.

Investments in gender equality can improve the lives of both men and women, with lasting benefits for the next generations. For more than three decades, UNFPA has been in the forefront of bringing gender issues to wider attention, promoting legal and policy reforms and gender-sensitive data collection, and supporting projects that empower women economically.

UNFPA recognizes that attitudes and behaviours concerning gender relations and reproductive health are shaped by, and vary widely among, cultures. We are sensitive to cultural norms and values and tailor our approaches accordingly, respecting the needs and aspirations of communities. UNFPA has a long history of working with local leaders, faith-based organizations, community elders and other agents of change to eradicate practices that endanger women and youth, or otherwise restrict their rights.

*“Imagine the difference one girl can make. Educated, healthy and skilled, she will be an active citizen in her community.”*

Babatunde Osotimehin  
UNFPA Executive Director



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