



# 8

UNFPA West and Central Africa

**Acceleration Paper**

## **Responding to Humanitarian crises in West and Central Africa:**

conflict, climate change and displacement



Ensuring rights and choices for all



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## INTRODUCTION

UNFPA and partners are committed to moving forward faster. This paper is part of a series of “acceleration papers” that analyse bottlenecks and identify priority focus areas at regional and country level in West and Central Africa. The aim is to accelerate efforts to implement the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and UNFPA’s three transformative results: ending preventable maternal deaths, ending the unmet need for family planning and ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices. As UNFPA assesses progress in a midterm review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, these papers call for an acceleration of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

This paper is the result of a co-creation by the UNFPA representative from the Central African Republic, UNFPA advisors and specialists from the regional office.

The strategic plan states: “The acceleration of the three transformative results cannot be realized without prioritizing preparedness, early and anticipatory action and the provision of life-saving interventions, focusing on humanitarian, conflict and post-conflict contexts.” It is imperative that UNFPA accelerates its ability to prepare and respond effectively to crises and ensure coordination and synergy across its humanitarian, development and peace-responsive efforts.

The UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) will ensure that humanitarian work is fully embedded in regional and national-level work. We will also continue to strengthen our work with other United Nations agencies and stakeholders across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus so that work takes place along the continuum. This will enable a continued focus on preparedness and risk reduction, empowering the building of resilience to humanitarian crises of health systems, communities and individual women and girls.

# 1. THE WHAT AND WHERE: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

West and Central Africa is one of the regions with the greatest humanitarian needs in the world. In 2023, an estimated 67.5 million people are in need (OCHA, 2023). At the same time, the region hosts some of the most underfunded and under-supported crises (Humanitarian Funding Forecast, 2023). These humanitarian crises are impacted and driven by megatrends including the demographic dividend, climate change, displacement and migration and peace and security. These megatrends contribute to the growing conflict and insecurity that the region is experiencing and pose major threats to achieving the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 1.1 Demographic dividend

The demographic dividend can provide economic opportunities and growth. However, the high youth population coupled with limited education and economic opportunities are detrimental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and impact stability in the region. High fertility rates accompanied by poor access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services contribute to an increasingly young population. West and Central Africa has the highest population growth rates and the highest percentage of youth aged 15–24 years on the African continent (World Bank, 2023).

West and Central Africa also has one of the highest poverty incidences in the world, which is a significant factor in the high, and increasing number of out of school adolescents (UNHCR, 2022). The unfortunate reality in the region is that millions of school age children are not able to access education. COVID-19 school closures

have also led to more children being left further behind; it is estimated that 89 per cent of 10-year-olds are unable to understand a simple text after the COVID-19 pandemic (State of Global Learning Poverty, 2022). In addition, the instability due to conflict, both external and inter-communal, contributes to school closures.

Young people are at a disadvantage in terms of access to education, high unemployment and limited opportunities. This lack of access coupled with the growing political instability and insecurity in the region leaves young people in a challenging situation, and more concrete efforts are needed to harness their potential to transform the workforce and improve the political and social landscape. This includes providing access to education, sustainable economic opportunities and including youth in governance dialogues (UNFPA, 2018). These investments will improve stability in the region and contribute to peace and security.

## 1.2 Climate change

The impacts of climate change and natural disasters result in loss of life and severe damage to essential infrastructure. Droughts, water scarcity, floods and landslides, severe tropical storms and hurricanes displace millions of people and further exacerbate conditions in countries already experiencing protracted humanitarian crises. West and Central Africa has been experiencing an increase in food insecurity due to the long-lasting droughts and impacts of climate-related events such as flooding on agriculture and farming (ECHO, 2023). In 2022, the region experienced one of the worst flooding disasters on record, affecting over 8.5 million people in 20 countries (OCHA, 2023).

The complexity of the region in terms of food insecurity, violent events, and displacement is significant. Of particular concern is the projected increase in the number of people experiencing food crises in 2023 compared to the 2015–2020 average, as reported by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO, 2023). Almost half of the countries in West and Central Africa are expected to see more than a 100 percent increase in the number of people in food crisis. These countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, and Nigeria (ECHO, 2023).

Increased poverty and food insecurity are driven by climate-related loss of livelihoods, affecting maternal health (Blacksted & Smith, 2020) and contributing to displacement and further instability in the region. Climate-related emergencies cause major disruptions in access to health services and life-saving reproductive health commodities, including contraception (Bongaarts & Sitruk-Ware, 2019).

Climate change also increases susceptibility and spread of pandemics and epidemics, and the high levels of poverty across West and Central Africa increase the population's vulnerability to diseases. This was witnessed in the Ebola epidemic (2014 to 2016) and more recently in the COVID-19 pandemic. Climate change-related disasters disrupt the availability and accessibility of essential health and social services and disproportionately

affect women and girls, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups. Disasters and extreme weather events, including flooding and drought, are responsible for the majority of forced displacements worldwide (Global Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2023). Mass displacement places women and girls in vulnerable situations, often separated from family, with limited or no shelter, increasing risks of gender-based violence.

### 1.3 Conflict and displacement

Worldwide, there is an increase in the frequency and severity of natural, man-made and protracted crises. Globally, 1 in every 23 people urgently needs humanitarian assistance (GHNO, 2023) – among them 67.5 million in West and Central Africa. More than 1 per cent of the world's population, or 103 million people, are displaced.

Humanitarian crises are now also impacting countries in the regions traditionally considered low risk. As a result of violent extremism and transnational organized crime, spillover effects in the countries of the Gulf of Guinea have increased, resulting in an increasing number of displaced people in need of humanitarian assistance. An escalation of violence against civilians by armed groups has forced thousands to flee from Burkina Faso, with a reported 67,000 people seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Togo, placing humanitarian resources under strain as insecurity continues to plague the region (UNHCR, 2023).





## 2. THE WHY: BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Conflict, climate change and displacement

Achieving the three transformative results will be a challenge without a significant investment in humanitarian preparedness and response. This is considering that over half of all maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and fragile settings, family planning supplies and access are interrupted during crises and the risk of gender-based violence and harmful practices increases. Conflict,

climate change and mass displacement are key challenges to achieving the three transformative results. The rise in political instability in the region, made evident by the recent regime change in Niger and that of Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali since 2020. This instability further increases population displacement and exacerbates the lack of education and economic opportunities for youth and society in general.

**Figure 2:** Programming needs in response to conflict, climate change and displacement

**Conflict:** Humanitarian crises, whether natural or man-made, are more frequent, more intense and of longer duration



**Climate change:** Worsening climate change in West and Central Africa exacerbating impact of cyclical/multiple disasters



**Displacement:** Protracted situations, rise in violent extremism and political instability are increasing population displacement



Communities have acute and chronic needs and existing vulnerabilities are further exacerbated



Need for risk-informed programming and a stronger link between humanitarian, development and peace-building initiative



## 2.2 Lack of investment in resilience strategies

In countries where national authorities are prepared and have the capacity to respond to acute

emergencies, absorb shock and recover quickly, people have greater chances to uphold their sexual and reproductive health and rights and prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Countries with protracted crises and fragile contexts, however, such as the Central African Republic and Mali, have significant barriers to resilience and recovery. The following scenarios are prevalent in the region:

- » National capacities and systems may be weak or non-functional, prompting UNFPA to implement services directly or collaborate with external partners instead of local partners.
- » National authorities may not invest equitably in the protection or provision of services for certain populations, leading to persistent inequities that can be a source of conflict.
- » Certain geographical areas may only be accessible for Non-Food Items (NFIs) distribution and have limited service delivery due to security challenges or government restrictions; in such cases, upholding UNFPA's protection mandate is particularly challenging.

These factors often contribute to UNFPA Country Offices having to balance the delivery of both humanitarian and development programming, which is often complicated by insufficient funding streams, staff and resources. At the same time, the gap between humanitarian and development programming, referred to as the humanitarian–development divide, adds another type of challenge. Traditionally, the two programmatic areas did not interact, leaving at times a gap between life-saving humanitarian interventions and longer-term development programmes that invest in strengthening institutional capacity. Resilience-based approaches have been proposed to bridge this divide, providing a strategy to initiate longer-term community-based programmes that should eventually lead to development.

## 2.3 Operational challenges

UNFPA WCARO experiences operational challenges in terms of sufficient preparedness to respond efficiently and promptly to humanitarian situations. This is a significant bottleneck that hinders the organization's ability to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and protect human rights and dignity.

### 2.3.1 Internal operational challenges

**Funding constraints:** Despite the increasingly complex and protracted needs in the region, there is a chronic lack of adequate funding to support humanitarian interventions. This has led to prioritization of interventions and may leave some critical needs unaddressed.

**Human resources and capacity:** UNFPA faces challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified staff with expertise in SRH and humanitarian response due to issues such as language. Inadequate training and a lack of skilled personnel can limit the ability to deliver quality services. Several key humanitarian training curricula are not available in French, limiting the reach of capacity building initiatives in the Francophone parts of the region, notably the training modules on Clinical Management of Sexual Violence Survivors in Crisis Settings known as the CMR/LIVES modules (IAWG, 2023).

**Data collection and analysis:** Limited access to accurate and up-to-date data on population demographics, health indicators and the needs of affected communities hampers the ability of UNFPA to design targeted and evidence-based interventions. Lack of personnel or clear lines of responsibility of existing staff to undertake regular and systematic data collection in humanitarian crises is also a challenge.

**Demographic dividend and youth engagement:** Despite the large youth population, there is a lack of platforms and mechanisms to engage them in decision-making processes, leading to policies and interventions that may not be youth-centric or effective.



### 2.3.2 External factors that influence the ability of UNFPA to respond

**Security concerns:** Ongoing conflicts and political instability in various countries within West and Central Africa create volatile environments that hinder the ability to access affected populations. Humanitarian workers often face threats to their safety, limiting their ability to deliver essential services.

**Infrastructure and logistics:** Poor infrastructure, including damaged roads, lack of reliable transportation and limited communication networks, make it difficult for humanitarian actors to reach remote and conflict-affected areas. This leads to delays in delivering crucial supplies and services to those in need.

**Cultural and social norms:** Deep-rooted cultural and social norms often hinder UNFPA's efforts to address sensitive issues around SRH and gender-based violence. Stigma and misconceptions surrounding these topics can lead to resistance from local communities, making it challenging to gain buy-in, demand and implement effective programmes.

**Gender disparities:** The region faces challenges in ensuring equal opportunities for both young men and women, especially in areas of education and employment. This can exacerbate gender inequalities and hinder the realization of the demographic dividend.

## 3. THE HOW (WHAT WORKS): STRATEGIES TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS

The acceleration of the three transformative results cannot be realized without prioritizing preparedness, early and anticipatory action and the provision of life-saving interventions, focusing on humanitarian, conflict and post-conflict contexts, according to the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. The plan calls for strategies that shift from predominantly reacting to disaster and conflicts to instead preparing and empowering individuals and communities and strengthening national systems to withstand and recover from them. Internally, UNFPA also must equip staff with the skills and resources to be better prepared for humanitarian emergencies and to respond effectively when disaster strikes.

The following strategies are proposed to address the bottlenecks and accelerate progress.

### 3.1 Investing in preparedness and resilience building

The strategic shift in UNFPA is from a reactive operating environment, to one that is risk informed and well-prepared to withstand and recover from disasters. Given the context and the known risk factors, West and Central Africa must improve the ability of UNFPA Country Offices to build resilience and prepare for disasters. Resilience is defined by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction UNDRR as “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management” (UNDRR, 2020). Figure 3 depicts the layers of resilience that need to be built to prepare for shocks.



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**Figure 3: Varying layers and strategies for building resilience**

**National/societal resilience:**

- Positive traditions and customs
- National DRR Policies and disaster management laws in place
- Early warning/early action systems
- Flexible forecast-based financing
- Social protections schemes

**Community resilience:**

- Active participation
- Connectedness
- Collective action
- Local women's, DPO, youth group leadership and decision-making
- Community-based evacuation plans
- Safe and equitable water access points
- Community watch groups



**Institutional resilience:**

- Strong health and school infrastructure
- Mobile health units
- WASH systems
- Seawalls
- ECs with universal access
- Empowered, trained and skilled personnel
- Sufficient disaster budget
- Logistics and supply chain system

**Family/individual resilience:**

- Equal household decision-making
- Livelihood and economic opportunities
- Access to essential services
- Access to education and safe school climate
- Supportive intergenerational relationships

**Acronyms:** EC = Emergency contraception, DPO = United Nations Department of Peace Operations

UNFPA Country Offices should work jointly with other United Nations agencies and partners that have a robust preparedness approach including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Individuals, communities and governments need to be empowered to implement resilience strategies and to adapt before, during and after a disaster occurs. The aim is to link prevention,

preparedness and a strong humanitarian response with national capacity-building and investments in local organizations, including engaging women's and youth networks as part of medium- and longer-term development. Investments are needed in both short-term humanitarian response and longer-term resilience and institution building for this work to have an impact on achieving the three transformative results.

Country Offices will shift from merely reacting to disasters and conflicts to applying a resilience approach. Under the West and Central Africa humanitarian acceleration strategy, resilience can be bolstered by strengthening the human resources capacity of UNFPA staff, implementing partners, community organizations and national institutions such as ministries of health and protection. An example is building the capacity of a midwifery workforce that can work across both humanitarian response and in times of peace.

UNFPA WCARO will support Country Offices in humanitarian preparedness, risk-informed programming and building resilience, thereby building capacity to transition into longer-term recovery and development. This can come in analysis, planning and programming to achieve collective outcomes. The aim is increased operational flexibility of Country Offices to deliver quality programmes with a particular focus on the capacity to:

- » Strengthen early warning/risk assessment and early action
- » Foster community resilience with a special focus on youth, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups
- » Strengthen the resilience of health systems
- » Invest in women and young people for peace and security
- » Reinforce human resource capacity such as humanitarian midwifery training, and not replacing local and national actors for building resilience
- » Improve risk-informed programming to incorporate vulnerability analysis in programme and project design, implementation and monitoring process
- » Support capacity building of institutions before disaster strikes thereby enhancing preparedness to respond to and mitigate anticipated risks to ensure the safety and well-being of women, girls and young people.

### 3.2 Strengthening work within the humanitarian-peace-development nexus

In West and Central Africa, UNFPA is committed to integrating its work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, as called for in the strategic plan. This includes closer coordination with the Humanitarian, Development and Peace pillars within UNFPA, to enhance synergies and better understanding. This also includes recognizing and strengthening young people’s capacities to be effective humanitarian actors and empowering and supporting local youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response.

UNFPA should support systematic engagement and partnership with youth, in all phases of humanitarian action through sharing of information and involvement in decision-making processes at all levels, including budget allocations. In particular, UNFPA should target youth-led initiatives that are working with affected youth, including young refugees and internally displaced persons, including those living in informal urban settlements and slums, and integrating the peace agenda. Peace and security can also be integrated into capacity building efforts of Country Offices to strengthen understanding of how to integrate activities across the continuum, for example in SRH and GBV in emergency training. The Youth Peace and Security (YPS) agenda should fall within UNFPA’s humanitarian response resource mobilization efforts to allow funds to support YPS activities integration within Country Offices.

Advocacy work in humanitarian countries can include peace and security as well as working with traditional partners such as religious leaders to create or revitalize peace committees. This can come in the form of regular dialogue between stakeholders, joint-analysis and planning, and developing programmes that work towards shared goals. As an example, countries are already aligning multi-year Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) with United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). UNFPA needs to ensure internal strengthening of the humanitarian–

development–peace nexus and Country Offices can then position themselves at country level within the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). An example of internal work within the nexus includes joint GBV initiatives that work between emergencies and development contexts. Another example is scaling up the Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations (MISP) towards comprehensive services including health systems strengthening and institution-building for a humanitarian exit strategy towards a sustainable, positive impact on development outcomes. Further strategies to improve resilience and preparedness include efforts to:

- » Align actions with political and social processes aimed at preventing, mitigating conflicts and sustaining peace
- » Address drivers of conflict, the underlying root causes such as exclusion, systemic discrimination and marginalization
- » Support national systems to deliver on sustainable peace based on inclusive security for all so that women, girls and youth can actively participate in public life
- » Mitigate fragility by seizing development opportunities, building resilience of national and local actors, and establishing a sustainable model for crisis recovery
- » Strengthen support to civil society and leverage the leadership of women’s and youth organizations in all contexts.

These actions can help strengthen the approach to working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus in West and Central Africa and spur greater efficiency with joint initiatives and shared resources.

### **3.3 Implement WCARO capacity building strategy for UNFPA leadership and staff to strengthen preparedness and respond to humanitarian crises**

The best resources of organizations are human resources. Acknowledging the unique expertise, knowledge and understanding that UNFPA staff and leadership have of the global and local contexts and integrating that into learning interventions is fundamental to prepare for and be able to respond to humanitarian crises.

At the same time, it must be recognized that humanitarian capacity strengthening is not a discrete set of tasks to be completed once and for all, but a continual cycle of learning, applying that learning, integrating changes in real-time and observing the impact, and identifying what else needs to be addressed to ensure relevant capacity strengthening at various levels and among different cohorts of staff. Building on experience training and strengthening humanitarian capacities at all levels (management/leadership and technical) in Country Offices and based on the UNFPA humanitarian response “fit for purpose” approach and actions, the Regional Office will undertake measures to strengthen capacity across the countries of the region.

### **3.4 Strengthening humanitarian communication for West and Central Africa**

Communication is a powerful tool that can influence change, shape perceptions and foster partnerships. Recognizing its significance, a tailored communication strategy for the West and Central Africa region is essential. This section outlines a tailored communication strategy for the region, aligned with the UNFPA Strategic Plan and the humanitarian output. The strategy aims to amplify the voice of the vulnerable, advocate for the three transformative results, and foster a culture of preparedness and resilience in the region.



### 3.4.1 Primary objective

The primary objective is to raise awareness and deepen the understanding of the humanitarian crises in West and Central Africa. This involves highlighting the intricate links between the demographic dividend, climate change and other significant trends. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to advocate for action. This entails mobilizing a diverse range of stakeholders, from governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to local communities, to prioritize and address the challenges that have been identified. A key component of this strategy is to engage and empower the populace, especially by fostering dialogue and participation among the youth, with their potential and drive towards a resilient and prosperous region. Lastly, strengthening partnerships is of paramount importance. Collaborating effectively with United Nations agencies and other partners will ensure a coordinated and impactful response to the crises.

### 3.4.2 Target audiences

The target audiences are diverse and encompass various stakeholders across the region. At the grassroots level, the aim is to reach local communities, with a particular emphasis on the youth, women and vulnerable populations. On a governance scale, the focus is on government partners at regional, national and local levels.

United Nations agencies, NGOs and other potential partners can amplify UNFPA efforts. Donors and investors, both from within the region and globally, are also a significant audience. Lastly, the media, spanning local, regional and international outlets, plays a crucial role in disseminating messages.

### 3.4.3 Key messages

The key messages underscore the pressing humanitarian needs in West and Central Africa. It is vital to highlight the urgency of these needs and the significance of early and anticipatory action. The youth demographic stands at the forefront of messaging, emphasizing their potential and the importance of their inclusion in decision-making processes. Climate resilience is another pivotal message, advocating for proactive measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the region. Gender equality is also central to communication, promoting the rights and choices of women and girls as fundamental to both development and peace. Regular assessments will ensure the effectiveness of these communication efforts, using feedback mechanisms such as surveys and focus group discussions to gather insights from community engagement activities.

A robust communication strategy is essential for the success of UNFPA's humanitarian programming acceleration in the region. By effectively engaging target audiences, leveraging partnerships and

continuously monitoring and refining our approach, UNFPA WCARO can ensure that communication efforts contribute significantly to the realization of strategic objectives in the region. For more

information, UNFPA staff may refer to *UNFPA WCARO's Roadmap for Quality Humanitarian Actions within the Nexus Space, 2023–2025*.<sup>1</sup>

## 4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR UNFPA WCARO?

This section describes how UNFPA WCARO will tap into the six accelerators to meet targets for the three transformative results.

### 4.1 Human rights-based and gender transformative approaches

#### 4.1.1 Recommended actions

- » Work with UNFPA Country Offices to further strengthen capacity and understanding of human rights-based and gender transformative approaches as they are fundamental to the work that is needed to accelerate improvements in humanitarian response. This includes ensuring all staff understand and respect the core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in their work, especially in contexts where ethnicity may be a critical factor in conflict.
- » Support UNFPA Country Offices to implement respectful maternity care across all the work that UNFPA does in humanitarian settings, and when working with partners and governments to do the same. This will be a core unit in the humanitarian midwifery curriculum. The Regional Office should encourage and recruit more women to be humanitarian coordinators and in leadership positions in humanitarian countries.

- » Strengthen effective inter-agency GBV coordination and ensure that all humanitarian contexts have an international GBV Coordinator to lead the national interagency coordination.
- » Improve data collection and implement an automated system to ensure all data on emerging and existing humanitarian crises is current and can be used to inform management where there is a need for advocacy or improved response, and to share with partners and other stakeholders.

#### 4.1.2 Proposed activities under the region's humanitarian road map for 2024 and 2025<sup>2</sup>

- » Humanitarian Leadership Training x 2 in French and English
- » MISP Training of Trainers (ToT)
- » Completion of MISP Readiness Assessment
- » Regional Values and Attitudes Transformation (VCAT) exercise
- » Organize French language Clinical Management of Rape ToT to develop regional roster of trainers
- » Humanitarian Surge Training
- » Humanitarian Midwives Capacity Building Programme initiated
- » Gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE) capacity building programme initiated

<sup>1</sup> To request a copy of the humanitarian roadmap, please contact UNFPA WCARO Communications Advisor Siaka Traore (traore@unfpa.org) or humanitarian staff Karen Hobday (hobday@unfpa.org).

<sup>2</sup> UNFPA WCARO's Roadmap for Quality Humanitarian Actions within the Nexus Space, 2023–2025.





- » Missions to support UNFPA Country Offices
- » Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) for GBV Case Management Training
- » Regional stock prepositioning as part of preparedness and acute response.

#### 4.2 Innovation and digitization

- » Scale up innovative approaches and technology to improve access to information in humanitarian settings, e.g. providing low-cost tablets to partners and using KOBO software that can be used offline to collect data and streamline processes. Install Wi-Fi in one-stop centres and safe spaces to improve communication, educational and employment opportunities for women and girls. Digitize accountability to affected populations mechanisms including utilize QR codes and apps for feedback and monitoring of services and supplies. This can be done in collaboration or with support from other United Nations agencies, such as WFP, who have already started implementing some of these measures in areas that have limited accessibility.
- » Work on a Regional Cash and Voucher Strategy and involve countries in humanitarian settings to implement innovative methods to improve service provision, response and access to cash to meet immediate and essential needs

of vulnerable populations including pregnant women and GBV survivors.

- » Work with Country Offices on further strengthening GBV information management systems in a systematic manner to sustain capacity in the region.
- » Support self-care approaches that empower women and reduce interruption of services when health facilities are inaccessible due to disasters or conflict. This may include family planning methods, STI testing or misoprostol for the prevention of postpartum hemorrhage.
- » Build capacity for Country Offices on the integration of mental health and psychosocial support within both GBV and SRH services in emergencies.

#### 4.3 Partnerships and South-South and triangular cooperation, and financing

- » Expand partnerships with women-led organizations, especially those working across the nexus and grassroots initiatives to promote community-driven solutions. Country Offices will seek out joint-initiatives with other United Nations agencies, for example working with WFP or UNDP on CVA approaches.
- » Reinvigorate the Communities of Practice for SRH and GBV to encourage information sharing and dialogue across countries. The Regional Office will communicate regularly

with other Regional Offices' humanitarian units for resource and information sharing, working jointly where possible to deliver capacity building opportunities.

#### 4.4 Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind

- » Implement a values clarification and transformation course for staff in West and Central Africa at regional and country level
- » Strengthen capacity of Country Offices to support Implementation of the MISP, including the first objective of coordination. Support is required for both clinicians and project managers to ensure roll out takes place in humanitarian and spillover countries.
- » Provide CMR-IPV training in French in the priority humanitarian crises and expand further to spillover countries if funding permits.
- » Strengthen GBV programming in emergencies ensuring that all Country Offices and partners have the foundations and apply UNFPA's Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to GBV in Emergencies and The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming. Strengthen capacity of implementing partners and where possible national staff to provide quality case management services for GBV survivors.

#### 4.5 Data and evidence

- » Work with OCHA to improve risk-informed programming and incorporate vulnerability analysis in programme and project design, implementation and the monitoring process.

- » Support Country Office to improve their situation reports (SitReps) and initiate the process for spillover countries to write and submitting regular monthly reports. Re-introduce a digitized/automated system for the collection of monthly humanitarian data, including humanitarian funding.

#### 4.6 Resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts

- » Pursue joint GBV initiatives that work between emergencies and development contexts
- » Scale up the MISP towards comprehensive services including health systems strengthening and institution-building for a humanitarian exit strategy towards a sustainable, positive impact on development outcomes.
- » Align actions with political and social processes aimed at preventing and mitigating conflicts and sustaining peace.
- » Address drivers of conflict and the underlying root causes such as exclusion, systemic discrimination and marginalization.
- » Support national systems to deliver on sustainable peace based on inclusive security for all so that women, girls and youth can actively participate in public life.
- » Mitigate fragility by seizing development opportunities, building resilience of national and local actors, and establishing a sustainable model for crisis recovery.
- » Strengthen support to civil society and leverage the leadership of women's and youth organizations in all contexts.





## 5. CONCLUSION

It is imperative to reflect on the pivotal strides made and the challenges that lie ahead. The UNFPA journey towards fulfilling the ambitious goals set forth in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 has been marked by significant advancements, yet the path ahead demands renewed vigor and innovation.

In the face of escalating humanitarian needs across West and Central Africa, compounded by complex challenges such as climate change, conflict and displacement, our commitment to the three transformative results – ending preventable maternal deaths, ending the unmet need for family planning, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices – remains unwavering. The demographic dividend is a potential catalyst for economic growth, yet this opportunity underscores the urgent need for focused interventions to harness the potential of a burgeoning youth population, particularly in the realms of education and employment.

Our analysis reveals that investing in preparedness and resilience-building, coupled with a robust and coordinated approach within the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, is crucial. The strategies outlined are foundational to our success: prioritizing early action, fortifying health systems, engaging youth and women, and enhancing operational capacities.

As we move forward, our focus must intensify on bridging the humanitarian and development divide, leveraging innovation and digitization, and fostering partnerships to reach those furthest behind. The integration of a human rights-based and gender-transformative approach remains central to our mission.



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