



# Humanitarian Midwifery in West and Central Africa

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**The West and Central Africa (WCA) region faces immense humanitarian needs driven by conflict, instability, and climate change. In 2025, nearly 36 million people in the WCA Region are in need of humanitarian aid and 11.5 million are displaced<sup>1</sup>, with women and girls facing heightened risks like maternal mortality, gender-based violence (GBV), and limited access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.**

In 2023, it was estimated that half of the total global maternal deaths between 2000 and 2020 occurred in WCA with 125,215 maternal deaths each year.<sup>2</sup> To tackle this, UNFPA is working in partnership with Ministries of Health to strengthen health systems and midwifery workforces, including training midwives to respond to humanitarian crises to improve preparedness and response capacity.

<sup>1</sup> The Global Needs Overview 2025, Humanitarian Action, OCHA, 4 December 2024, available [here](#). This figure excludes the 21.2 million people in need and 6.3 million people displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is not a country covered within the scope of UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office.

<sup>2</sup> The United Nations Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, Trends in maternal mortality 2000 to 2020: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA/Population Division, 23/02/2023, available [here](#).

Humanitarian midwives offer a lifeline of support for women in humanitarian settings, where an average of **25 percent of those affected by crises are women and girls of reproductive age.**

## What is a Humanitarian Midwife?

Humanitarian Midwives are midwives who are nationally accredited to practice in their country and receive further training to enable them to work in humanitarian settings. The midwives are selected based on agreed criteria including valid certification, experience and willingness to deploy to humanitarian crises within their country. UNFPA, in partnership with Ministries of Health, delivers the training which includes Humanitarian Response and Preparedness, the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health in Crises and Clinical Management of Rape. After the training, the Humanitarian Midwives are registered on a roster, ready for deployment in crises.

## What is a Humanitarian Midwifery Roster?

UNFPA supports countries to establish a roster, or pool, of qualified humanitarian midwives who may be deployed to deliver critical life-saving services in humanitarian emergencies. UNFPA engages with the Ministries of Health in the training and deployment, which contributes to strengthened and resilient health systems. UNFPA also works alongside Midwifery and other health professional Associations and advocates for integration of the MISP in national midwifery curricula. Depending on the country, the Ministry of Health manages the roster and supports the cost of salaries. In other contexts, UNFPA deploys midwives through implementing partners and covers the associated costs with the generous support of donor funding.

Salaries range from 239–1,460 USD per month depending on the country, the salary scale and the organization or government covering the costs. The length of deployments varies and may be for a short period in the initial acute phase of the emergency (4–6 weeks), or longer (3–6 months) depending on the needs.

## What is the role of a Humanitarian Midwife?

Humanitarian Midwives provide women and girls who are in need of humanitarian assistance with essential life-saving services such as obstetric and newborn care, including cesarean deliveries, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, family planning methods and counselling. The midwives also address the needs of GBV survivors and provide clinical management of rape, and safe referrals for psychosocial support. The provision of integrated SRH and GBV services is crucial to ensure identification and care of GBV survivors in emergency contexts, where an estimated one in five women experience sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>

**UNFPA supports countries in establishing a roster of qualified humanitarian midwives who deliver life-saving services during humanitarian emergencies.**

<sup>3</sup> IAWG, Women's Refugee Commission, Minimum Initial Service Package MISP For Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) in Crisis Situations: a Distance Learning Module | Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises, "Unit 3: Prevent Sexual Violence and Respond to the Needs of Survivors", 5/5/2021.



## Why is this Initiative Critical?

The deployment of skilled midwives in humanitarian settings is crucial since women and girls of reproductive age are vulnerable in humanitarian crises, demonstrated by the high maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity rates and increased prevalence of GBV in emergencies.

More than 500 maternal deaths occur daily in humanitarian and fragile contexts and 64% of the global maternal deaths occur in the countries with 2023 UN Humanitarian Appeals.<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian midwives offer life-saving services and support for women and adolescents in humanitarian settings, their work is critical to ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights are upheld.

## Situation Overview: WCA Humanitarian Midwives

14 countries in the WCA region, including seven out of eight countries with ongoing humanitarian response and four out of five spillover countries,<sup>5</sup> have established humanitarian midwifery rosters. In total, there are over 1,150 certified and trained midwives across the region deployed or prepared to deploy to humanitarian crises. UNFPA WCA regional office aims to support all 23 countries in the WCA region with the establishment of rosters to increase regional preparedness.

UNFPA is making a significant impact through this initiative. For example, in Cameroon and Chad, UNFPA supported 183 humanitarian midwives who assisted over 10,000 births during the month of September, following the devastating floods affecting the countries since July 2024.

Continued investment in this program is crucial to expand capacity enhancement, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that every woman and girl in WCA has access to quality SRH care, even in the most challenging circumstances. Join us in supporting humanitarian midwives to provide life-saving essential SRH and GBV services in humanitarian crises.

<sup>4</sup> IAWG, "Maternal and Newborn Health", [Maternal and Newborn Health | Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises \(iawg.net\)](https://www.iawg.net/).

<sup>5</sup> Humanitarian countries include Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Republic of Congo; Spillover countries, which host displaced populations due to neighbouring crises, include Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Mauritania.

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