Theory of change

UNFPA STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021
The Goal

POPULATION DYNAMICS

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

Achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realize reproductive rights, and reduce maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda

WOMEN

HUMAN RIGHTS

GENDER EQUALITY

Enable by…

To improve the lifes of…
I. INTRODUCTION

1. The UNFPA strategic plan articulates a set of results at the impact, outcome and output levels that UNFPA plans to achieve during 2018-2021. This annex presents the theory of change underlying the results articulated in the strategic plan.

2. The theory of change presents the causal conditions that must be in place to achieve the results. It also outlines, with evidence, the causal linkage between conditions and results, and spells out the risks and assumptions that may impede the results chain from occurring.

3. The strategic plan, 2018-2021 has introduced a number of changes to strengthen the theory of change from those used in prior strategic plan cycles.

   (a) Introduction of intermediate results between the outcomes and outputs, to complete the results pathway. In the theory of change for the previous strategic plan (which mapped results only at the impact, outcome and output levels), there were gaps in the results pathway, as the output results were far from the outcome results on the pathway. Intermediate changes have been identified to bridge this gap.

   (b) One unified theory of change per outcome. The previous strategic plan drew one theory of change per outcome and another theory of change per output. In the current strategic plan, one unified theory of change covers the entire results pathway from the goal through to outcomes, outputs and interventions. There will be no separate output theories of change.

   (c) Comprehensive outcome theories of change, including all conditions deemed necessary to achieve the outcome, highlighting interlinkages and interdependencies among these conditions. The causal conditions may include ones that will not be directly addressed by UNFPA but pursued instead through partnerships (hereafter called critical assumptions). In the same vein, the conditions mapped for an outcome may include those that will be addressed under another UNFPA strategic plan outcome, demonstrating the integrated nature of the strategic plan outcomes.

   (d) The inclusion of critical barriers or root causes, which are systemic or structural issues that can impede the achievement of results even when the necessary conditions have been put in place. These causes may be related to multifaceted factors such as poverty or cultural factors that should be considered in order to induce change.
II. THE THEORY OF CHANGE

4. UNFPA plans to contribute to the 2030 Agenda through the goal of the strategic plan, 2018-2021, to “achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realize reproductive rights, and reduce maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights, and gender equality”.

5. While the goal of the strategic plan contributes to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the plan most directly aligns to: Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages); Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls); Goal 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries); Goal 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels); and Goal 17 (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development).

6. UNFPA has committed to focus on three transformative results: (a) end preventable maternal deaths; (b) end the unmet need for family planning; and (c) end gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage.

7. The Fund aims to achieve these three transformative results by 2030 through the work of 3 four-year-cycle strategic plans, the first of which is the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021. Milestone targets for the three transformative results will be set to track progress for each of the strategic plans.

8. Investing in sexual and reproductive health is critical for sustainable development. It enhances the chances for women, adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls, to fulfill their potential and contribute to the overall development of society. Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.6 calls on governments and partners to, “ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences”.

9. Evidence shows that ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights unleashes numerous benefits
### III. OUTCOME 1 CHANGE MODEL

**Outcome 1.** Every woman, adolescent and youth everywhere, especially those furthest behind, has utilized integrated sexual and reproductive health services and exercised reproductive rights, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

**Figure 2: Outcome 1 change model in brief**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>CRITICAL ENABLERS</th>
<th>BARRIERS AND ROOT CAUSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realized reproductive rights, and reduced maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights and gender equality.</td>
<td>Every woman, adolescent and youth everywhere, especially those furthest behind, has utilized integrated sexual and reproductive health services and exercised reproductive rights, free of coercion.</td>
<td>Strengthened provision of high-quality, integrated sexual and reproductive health information and services.</td>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access, coverage, quality and safety of sexual and reproductive health services improved.</td>
<td>Supply of health services improved.</td>
<td>Strengthened capacities of the health workforce, especially those of midwives.</td>
<td>Service provision is not integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive environment available.</td>
<td>Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies that prioritize access to information and services for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for those furthest behind.</td>
<td>Strengthened capacities to effectively forecast, procure, distribute and track the delivery of sexual and reproductive health commodities.</td>
<td>Lack of accountability mechanisms for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights access and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand for services of women and young people improved.</td>
<td>Improved domestic accountability mechanisms for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.</td>
<td>Improved sustainable financing for sexual and reproductive health.</td>
<td>Low quality sexual and reproductive health services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened national data systems and improved demographic intelligence to enable identification and planning for those left behind or affected by crises and natural disasters (linked to outcome 4).</td>
<td>Not every woman, adolescent or youth, especially those furthest behind, is utilizing integrated sexual and reproductive health services.</td>
<td>Fostered national ownership.</td>
<td>Lack of accountability mechanisms for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights access and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced capacities to develop and implement policies that prioritize access to information and services for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for those furthest behind.</td>
<td>Intervention protocols and service delivery protocols available.</td>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration.</td>
<td>Low/no capacity of health workforce, especially midwives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved infrastructure.</td>
<td>Scaled-up innovative approaches and good practices.</td>
<td>Improved infrastructure.</td>
<td>Low/no effective supply chain system for reproductive health commodities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Italicized phrases:* Condition not directly addressed by UNFPA (critical assumptions)  
*Underlined phrases:* Condition linked to another strategic plan outcome
**IV. OUTCOME 2 CHANGE MODEL**

**Outcome 2.** Every adolescent and youth, in particular adolescent girls, is empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in all contexts

*Figure 3: Outcome 2 change model in brief*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPACT</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>CRITICAL EMABLERS</th>
<th>BARRIERS AND ROOT CAUSES</th>
<th>PROBLEM OR DEPENDENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realized reproductive rights, and reduced maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights and gender equality</td>
<td>Achieved universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realized reproductive rights, and reduced maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights and gender equality</td>
<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
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<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every adolescent and youth, in particular adolescent girls, is empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in all contexts</td>
<td>Every adolescent and youth, in particular adolescent girls, is empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in all contexts</td>
<td>Conducive environment for adolescent and youth available</td>
<td>Conducive environment for adolescent and youth available</td>
<td>Conducive environment for adolescent and youth available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access, coverage, quality and safety of sexual and reproductive health services improved</td>
<td>Access, coverage, quality and safety of sexual and reproductive health services improved</td>
<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
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<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and positive attitudes about sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights improved among adolescents, especially among adolescent girls in all settings</td>
<td>Knowledge and positive attitudes about sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights improved among adolescents, especially among adolescent girls in all settings</td>
<td>Skills and capabilities to make informed choices about sexual and reproductive health and rights and well-being improved, including through comprehensive sexuality education</td>
<td>Skills and capabilities to make informed choices about sexual and reproductive health and rights and well-being improved, including through comprehensive sexuality education</td>
<td>Skills and capabilities to make informed choices about sexual and reproductive health and rights and well-being improved, including through comprehensive sexuality education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive environment for adolescent and youth available</td>
<td>Conducive environment for adolescent and youth available</td>
<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
<td>Policies and programmes in relevant sectors addressed the determinants of adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened national data systems and improved demographic intelligence to enable identification and planning for those left behind or affected by crises and natural disasters (linked to Outcome 4)</td>
<td>Strengthened national data systems and improved demographic intelligence to enable identification and planning for those left behind or affected by crises and natural disasters (linked to Outcome 4)</td>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration</td>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration</td>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihood opportunities available for adolescents and youth</td>
<td>Livelihood opportunities available for adolescents and youth</td>
<td>Accurate and appropriate information, education and communication tools and platforms available</td>
<td>Accurate and appropriate information, education and communication tools and platforms available</td>
<td>Accurate and appropriate information, education and communication tools and platforms available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration</td>
<td>Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration</td>
<td>Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education both in school and out-of-school available</td>
<td>Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education both in school and out-of-school available</td>
<td>Age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education both in school and out-of-school available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders committed to adolescent and youth intervention and funding</td>
<td>Stakeholders committed to adolescent and youth intervention and funding</td>
<td>Mechanisms exist allowing the systematic inclusion of young people’s voice and leadership</td>
<td>Mechanisms exist allowing the systematic inclusion of young people’s voice and leadership</td>
<td>Mechanisms exist allowing the systematic inclusion of young people’s voice and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders are committed to adolescent and youth intervention and funding</td>
<td>Stakeholders are committed to adolescent and youth intervention and funding</td>
<td>Scaled up innovative approaches and good practices</td>
<td>Scaled up innovative approaches and good practices</td>
<td>Scaled up innovative approaches and good practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required intervention protocols and service delivery protocols available</td>
<td>Required intervention protocols and service delivery protocols available</td>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind</td>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind</td>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind</td>
<td>Not reaching those furthest behind</td>
<td>Lack of of integrated multispectral approach</td>
<td>Lack of of integrated multispectral approach</td>
<td>Lack of of integrated multispectral approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities to exercise leadership and participation</td>
<td>Lack of opportunities to exercise leadership and participation</td>
<td>Perpetuate harmful traditional practices and patriarchal social systems</td>
<td>Perpetuate harmful traditional practices and patriarchal social systems</td>
<td>Perpetuate harmful traditional practices and patriarchal social systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low school enrolment and high drop-out rate</td>
<td>Low school enrolment and high drop-out rate</td>
<td>Young people lack full political, civil, social and economic rights, undermining their autonomy</td>
<td>Young people lack full political, civil, social and economic rights, undermining their autonomy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discriminatory gender and socio-cultural norms do not recognize the positive contribution of adolescent and youth, and under value girls</td>
<td>Discriminatory gender and socio-cultural norms do not recognize the positive contribution of adolescent and youth, and under value girls</td>
<td>Public perception of young people, in particular young men, as perpetrators of violence and as a risk rather than as partners for change</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuate harmful traditional practices and patriarchal social systems</td>
<td>Perpetuate harmful traditional practices and patriarchal social systems</td>
<td>Power imbalance in the relationship between adolescents and adults</td>
<td>Power imbalance in the relationship between adolescents and adults</td>
<td>Power imbalance in the relationship between adolescents and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people lack full political, civil, social and economic rights, undermining their autonomy</td>
<td>Young people lack full political, civil, social and economic rights, undermining their autonomy</td>
<td>Humanitarian and crisis situations affect young people disproportionately</td>
<td>Humanitarian and crisis situations affect young people disproportionately</td>
<td>Humanitarian and crisis situations affect young people disproportionately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public perception of young people, in particular young men, as perpetrators of violence and as a risk rather than as partners for change</td>
<td>Public perception of young people, in particular young men, as perpetrators of violence and as a risk rather than as partners for change</td>
<td>Multidimensional poverty and socioeconomic exclusion of young people</td>
<td>Multidimensional poverty and socioeconomic exclusion of young people</td>
<td>Multidimensional poverty and socioeconomic exclusion of young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power imbalance in the relationship between adolescents and adults</td>
<td>Power imbalance in the relationship between adolescents and adults</td>
<td>Not all adolescents and youth, in particular adolescent girls, are empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights</td>
<td>Not all adolescents and youth, in particular adolescent girls, are empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights</td>
<td>Not all adolescents and youth, in particular adolescent girls, are empowered to have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome 3. Gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and reproductive rights are advanced in development and humanitarian settings

Figure 4: Outcome 3 change model in brief

Achieved universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realized reproductive rights, and reduced maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights and gender equality

Gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and reproductive rights are advanced in development and humanitarian settings

Women’s and girls’ engagement in social, political and economic life improved

Positive, safe, protective and facilitative environment available

1. Increased multi-sectoral capacity to prevent and address gender-based violence
2. Strengthened response to eliminate harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and son preference
3. Women’s leadership and participation improved
4. Improved livelihood opportunities for women
5. Skills and capabilities of girls to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights and well-being improved (linked to Outcome 2)
6. Leadership and participation opportunities of adolescent girls improved (linked to Outcome 2)

Strengthened national data systems and improved demographic intelligence to enable identification and planning for those left behind, or affected by crises and natural disasters (linked to Outcome 4)

Increased partnerships through multi-sectoral collaboration
Systems for inter-agency and intersectoral (including civil society) dialogue and coordination established
Men, boys, families and communities mobilised for girls and women’s rights
Intervention and service and delivery protocols available
Accountability mechanisms established, in line with human rights standards
Scaled up innovative approaches and good practices
Prepared for humanitarian and crisis situations

1. Strengthened policy, legal and accountability frameworks to advance and gender equality and empower women and girls to exercise their reproductive rights
2. Strengthened civil society and community mobilization to abandon discriminatory gender and social cultural norms
3. Improved access to integrated high quality sexual and reproductive health services (linked to outcome 1)

Not reaching those furthest behind
Discriminatory gender and socio-cultural norms
Gender-based violence
Harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and son preference
Not engaging men and boys
Unequal power relations, unequal participation and voice
Discrimination against women and girls
Lack of education
Desire to control women’s bodily integrity, autonomy, and decision-making
Multidimensional poverty and socio-economic exclusion
Insecurity due to humanitarian and crisis situations

Gender inequality persists, and women and girls are not empowered to access sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights are not exercise

Italicized phrases: Condition not directly addressed by UNFPA (critical assumptions)
Underlined phrases: Condition linked to another strategic plan outcome
**Outcome 4.** Everyone, everywhere, is counted, and accounted for, in the pursuit of sustainable development

![Figure 5: Outcome 4 change model in brief](image)

- **Achieved universal access to sexual and reproductive health,** realized reproductive rights, and reduced maternal mortality to accelerate progress on the ICPD agenda, to improve the lives of adolescents and youth, and women, enabled by population dynamics, human rights and gender equality.

- Everyone, everywhere, is counted and accounted for, in the pursuit of sustainable development.

- Analytic methods widely used to track inequalities within core indicators and populations.
- Produced and disseminated quality population data, including in humanitarian settings.
- Informed target setting, shaped programming, and monitored progress on the bulls-eye.

1. **Improved national population data systems to map and address inequalities,** to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitments of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and to strengthen interventions in humanitarian crises.
2. **Mainstreamed demographic intelligence** to improve the responsiveness, targeting and impact of development policies, programmes and advocacy.
3. **Improved infrastructure including information communication technology**

- Fostered national ownership and commitment to stronger population data systems as a means to advance development.
- Bridging the gap between data producers and users.
- New and innovative data system technologies adopted, including appreciation for geospatial data enhanced.
- National population data online platforms improved for sharing data.
- Capacity for the generation of demographic intelligence based on national data sources improved.
- Coordination and integrated use across national data sources improved.

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- Lack of availability among partners to deliver the critical assumptions.
- Under-appreciation of population data and statistics.
- Absence of culture of using national or sub-national level data for governance.
- Weak capital infrastructure (internet coverage, reliable power) for digital information systems and information technology.
- Lack of alignment between training, skills-building and career development for young population data specialists.
- Political stability, corruption-free environment, and adequate remuneration of national staff.
- Disruptions caused by conflict and humanitarian crisis, including active migration.

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People everywhere, especially the most vulnerable, are not counted or accounted for.