



WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023







**UNFPA in the West and Central Africa region**





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## MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

In 2023, UNFPA achieved significant milestones in the West and Central Africa region to solidify progress towards our strategic plan, particularly in accelerating the achievement of three transformative results: ending the unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal deaths and ending gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices.

Significant progress towards fulfilling the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action was also made possible in large part by the crucial work and coordinated efforts of country offices. Our collective efforts in 2023 not only transformed lives, but also laid the foundations for a more just, inclusive and sustainable society. This report therefore provides an overview of our collective efforts to shape a brighter and more equitable future for all, as our region marches towards a better tomorrow in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality and women's empowerment, reduction of GBV, and youth empowerment.

We stepped up our efforts to build national and regional capacity to deal with the constraints of the context in which we work. For example, in response to the worrying humanitarian situation in the region, we strengthened the capacity and leadership of 23 countries to implement the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Sexual and Reproductive Health to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services, including prevention of and response to GBV, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and accountability to affected displaced populations and victims of humanitarian crises.

Through advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity-building, UNFPA continued to support the achievement of regional targets on ending unmet need for family planning and preventable maternal deaths; promoting gender equality, empowering women and girls; and preventing and responding to GBV and harmful practices.

Finally, UNFPA supported the production and use of sociodemographic data.

This was achieved through strategic partnerships with sister United Nations agencies, the West African Health Organization (WAHO), health professional associations, youth networks and faith-based organizations, among others. UNFPA country offices had improved capacity to apply human-rights-based and gender-transformative approaches; improve supply chain management including ensuring last-mile

delivery; address HIV/STI prevention with a focus on young people, women and key populations; and improve the quality of maternal health services.

The year 2023 was marked by a change in the leadership of the Regional Office, with Argentina Matavel Piccin passing the torch. We salute her for the remarkable work she has done in the region, and especially for this successful transition, which demonstrated our organisation's ability to adapt to change.

Without the support of our donors, our regional partners and our 23 country offices, none of these outstanding interventions would have been possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the excellence of this partnership. It has been crucial to progress in our region.

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the ICPD, it is important to capitalize on all that has been achieved so far by documenting and learning from successful experiences.

In doing so, we will be able to make a meaningful contribution to the various meetings and help build the future we want.



**Dr. Sennen HOUNTON**

Regional Director, UNFPA, West and Central Africa





# 01

# 2023 Highlights







UNFPA in the West and Central Africa region



# 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



**More than 12000** maternal deaths were prevented.



**Around 3 million** unintended pregnancies were prevented.



**More than 8 million** modern contraceptive methods were used.



**Sixteen countries** carried out census activities.



All 20 West and Central African countries participating in the phase III of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership programme signed agreements through the Compact initiative UNFPA, amounting to a \$10 million financial commitment to family planning products from governments.



Twenty-three countries prepared their national contribution to the 10-year review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD+10), leading to a successful AADPD+10 review in Lusaka, including perspectives and priorities from women-led and youth-led civil society partners from the region.



Over 5 million individuals in the region were positively impacted through a wide range of innovation projects. These ranged from GBV awareness-raising through board games in Mali, to Burkina Faso's IMMI watch period tracker, and Benin's Self-care Challenge for youth-focused sexual and reproductive health (SRH) access.





02

ENDING  
UNMET NEED  
FOR FAMILY  
PLANNING





## MAIN INTERVENTIONS

### Financing for SRHR/family planning

**In 20 countries**, the Ministries of Health and Finance signed the Compact, with governments committing a total of \$10,041,214. This will allow diversified sources of funding for the procurement of reproductive health commodities.

It is part of the new vision to move from funding to financing. More than 44 per cent of government expenditure has been received and validated.

At the end of this Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded grant, the Ouagadougou Partnership (OP) Matching Fund Grant awarded \$14,525,482 across all nine OP countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo), and nine participating governments contributed 5,206,479 in total to reproductive health commodity procurement.

These countries are now scaling up such systems that incorporate reproductive health commodities, for improved visibility and better inventory management.

Seven countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mauritania and Niger) were assisted in implementing last-mile distribution pilot projects that target remote and vulnerable communities. These pilot projects led to different outcomes in different countries, resulting in the following recommendations: 1) compare last-mile distribution costs between the public and the private sector; 2) improve the digitization and integration of national information systems; and 3) adopt an integrated last-mile distribution circuit for health products.

Through collaboration with the Centre humanitaire des métiers de la pharmacie, a prototype platform was developed to monitor community-based distribution of contraceptive products to ensure that community-based distribution programmes align with the needs of communities, especially women and girls.

### Strengthening public health supply chain management systems

**Fourteen countries** were supported in implementing in-country assessments to identify critical areas of improvement to maintain the quality of reproductive health supplies while ensuring traceability of UNFPA- procured supplies throughout the chain.

As part of Transformative Action Plans funded under the UNFPA Supplies Partnership, six countries were supported in mobilizing technical and financial resources to implement electronic management information systems.



## Strategic advocacy and policy dialogue for an enabling environment

UNFPA WCARO and WAHO were selected as Vice-Chair and Chair respectively of the Steering Committee for the Community of Practice for Integrated Post-partum Family Planning in Francophone West Africa. This will allow UNFPA WCARO to more strategically advance the family planning agenda in collaboration with other members of the steering committee (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], Jhpeigo, IntraHealth/INSPIRE Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, African Society for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Family Planning 2030 [FP2030] and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa [WHO AFRO]).

## Capacity-building for family planning programmes

Twenty UNFPA country offices from West and Central Africa strengthened their capacities in applying human-rights-based and gender-transformative approaches to scaling up high-impact practices for family planning.

## Evidence generation for family planning

Nine country offices were supported in generating evidence on the socioeconomic returns of investing in the transformative results, including family planning services. These packaged together different types of evidence, including situation analyses, budget analyses, costing exercises, cost-benefit analyses and fiscal space analyses. Most of the investment cases will be finalized in early 2024 and will drive UNFPA's advocacy efforts for more and better investment in family planning services.

*It was never my intention to have three children by this age. I had my first at age 17, which was unplanned. The second and third were also unplanned. As a result, I have decided to use family planning [contraception] to prevent further unplanned pregnancies. Now, I am using the implant [long-acting reversible contraception], which I find comfortable.*

**Mother-of-three, Esther, 25, Liberia.**

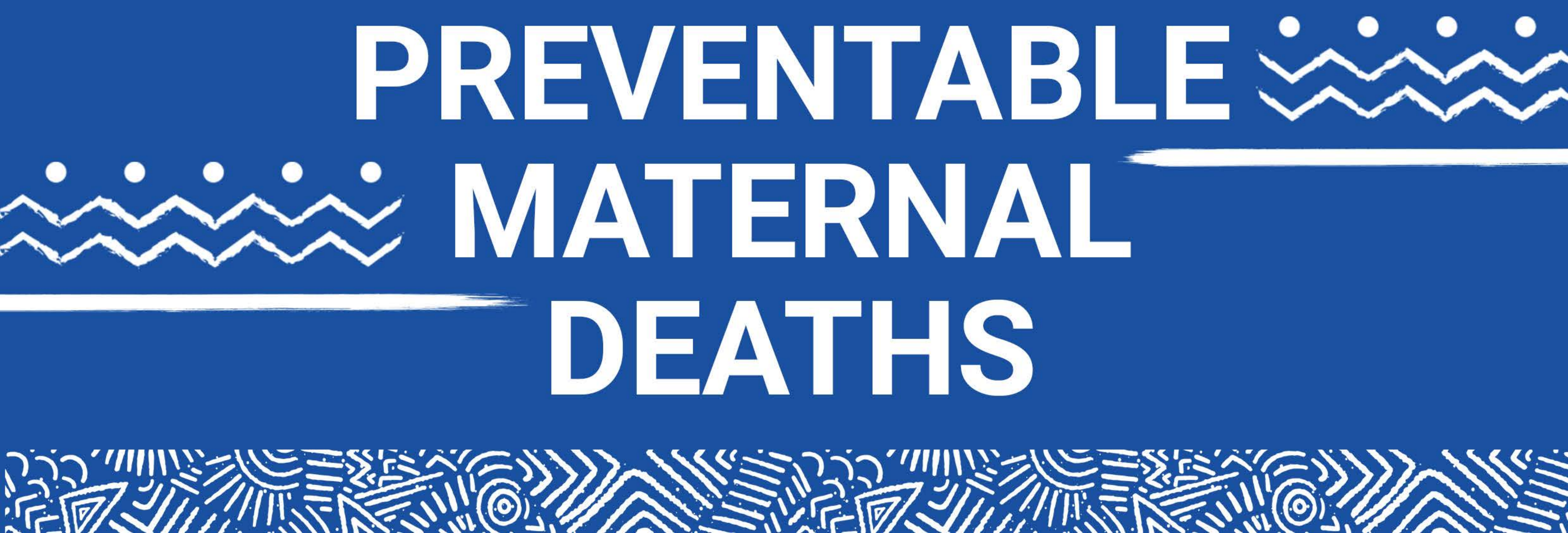






# 03

## ENDING PREVENTABLE MATERNAL DEATHS





# MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



## Capacity-building to deliver high-quality maternal health services

Technical guidance and tools were provided on establishing accreditation for midwifery education (in Cameroon) and establishing a centre of excellence for midwifery education (in Ghana).



Sixty-three midwife mentors received training using an online interactive, objective-based approach, tailored for remote learning in rural, hard-to-reach areas. These midwives will now share their knowledge with colleagues, with the support of the project team, throughout 2024. This training intended to strengthen the mentoring system and enable mentors to provide remote support for midwives, ensuring consistent training to improve quality of care for patients.

# MAIN INTERVENTIONS

## Quality of care

UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Women jointly supported the Ministry of Health in Chad to adapt the WHO norms, standards and evaluation tool for maternal and newborn health to the national context. A pool of 16 national evaluators were trained to assess the quality of maternal and newborn health services. This pool of evaluators will be supported in 2024 to scale up quality-of-care assessments to ensure adherence to the national maternal and newborn health standards and norms.

UNFPA WCARO provided technical and financial support to 70 participants from 16 countries in West and Central Africa to strengthen the implementation of evidence-based maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response (MPDSR) guidelines. This was also a response to countries' request for technical assistance on MPDSR, as prioritized in the joint Ending Preventable Maternal Death and Every Newborn Action Plan. In 2024, the 16 countries will be supported to strengthen MPDSR implementation to enhance the quality of maternal and newborn health.

## Strategic planning to reduce preventable maternal deaths

UNFPA WCARO supported eight countries (Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) to develop acceleration plans for ending preventable maternal and newborn mortality. It also assisted five countries to finalize these plans (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), which will be implemented in 2024.







04

**GENDER-  
BASED  
VIOLENCE**



# MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



## Gender-responsive legislations and policies:

UNFPA supported the development of legal frameworks and policies on GBV and the integration of gender equality into government plans: (i) Sierra Leone implemented a law granting women 14 weeks of maternity leave, equal pay and other rights. (ii) In Sao Tome and Principe, the minimum package of reproductive health services and GBV services was updated.



## Increased access to high-quality health services for survivors:

In the Central African Republic, UNFPA advocacy led to the Head of State allocating 20 million CFA from national resources to address GBV. The number of reported cases receiving timely medical attention rose from 25 per cent to 28 per cent in 2023.



## Enhanced data collection:

The Gambia established the GBV Information Management System, a tool to safely collect, analyse and share data on reported incidents of GBV, allowing for better GBV response, data collection, reporting and coordination of referrals.

# MAIN INTERVENTIONS



UNFPA WCARO and UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) played a significant role in supporting the African Union's (AU) **third Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity**. UNFPA organized a consultation with 120 youth on positive masculinity in collaboration with the AU and the Government of Senegal. Youth presented the consultation outcome document to AU leaders and it will feed into discussions on the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa.



With support from the EU-funded Spotlight Initiative, feminist francophone civil society partners were mobilized to influence and share recommendations for the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD+10) review process.



## Universal Periodic Review

### Improving the capacity of national human rights institutions to advance SRHR:

National human rights institutions have a key role to play in promoting SRHR and preventing GBV and harmful practices. A workshop with 14 countries from francophone Africa enhanced these institutions' accountability in advocating for SRHR. It also provided an opportunity to share knowledge across countries and subregions throughout the African continent on prior experiences and good practices for employing a human-rights-based approach to addressing SRHR, GBV and harmful practices. This led to joint action plans to launch national inquiries and investigations on a range of human rights issues.







## CHILD MARRIAGE

- WCARO supported 13 countries in addressing adolescent pregnancies and child marriage through a life-cycle approach that included information and services on SRH, livelihoods and life skills to advocate for change.
- Chad, Guinea and Nigeria were supported to apply to join the Global Programme to End Child Marriage as “rising star” countries. The Nigeria country office convened youth and other stakeholders to shape the national strategy to end child marriage (under review).
- The national youth forum committed to establishing a Nigerian Youth Network across the 36 States of the Global Programme to End Child Marriage.
- Recognizing the impact that food insecurity and climate change have on harmful practices, WCARO and the World Food Programme (WFP) conducted a literature review on the interlinkages between child marriage and food insecurity, aimed at generating evidence and documenting knowledge gaps.



## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

- **The Second African Union International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation** held in October 2023 reached over 500 participants globally. The three-day conference highlighted the importance of engaging youth, such as through the Global Youth Consortium Against FGM, as powerful change agents. A 16-point change agenda outcome included the need to provide young people with a safe space to discuss their needs. Overall outcomes included the need to continue to generate home-grown evidence and data for advocacy and programming, and to ensure a more coordinated multisectoral approach with commitment to funding.
- **The Harmful Practices Innovation Summit** held in October 2023 brought together over 230 youth entrepreneurs, as well as civil society and policymakers from 23 countries across Africa and the Middle East. In the final pitch event, a young Nigerian innovator won \$20,000 in seed funding for the SmartRR App, which will now be translated into French for wider adoption across the region. In 2024, a key follow-up action to the summit will be the launch of the UNFPA ENGINE platform. Dedicated to empowering young African women and girls, this platform will provide a space for them to lead innovative efforts against harmful practices.
- UNFPA WCARO, in partnership with other UN Agencies, worked to address the call for repeal of the anti-female genital mutilation law in The Gambia which would constitute a violation of numerous international and regional legal agreements.









**UNLOCKING  
THE POTENTIAL  
OF ADOLESCENTS  
AND YOUTH**







## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



Twenty-five countries unanimously endorsed the West and Central Africa Commitment for Educated, Healthy and Thriving Adolescents and Young People.




Across 13 countries, 4.9 million youth who are out of school received access to comprehensive sexuality education and essential life skills.





Fourteen countries increased their capacity to implement the youth peace and security agenda in West and Central Africa. Ten countries drafted road maps for developing national action plans.

## MAIN INTERVENTIONS

### YOUTH SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

 Twenty-five countries unanimously endorsed the West and Central Africa Commitment for Educated, Healthy and Thriving Adolescents and Young People in Brazzaville. The commitment spells out specific objectives on comprehensive information and education, youth responsive services, HIV prevention, gender equality, ending harmful practices, and targeted domestic resource allocation for adolescent and youth SRHR.

 UNFPA WCARO and UNFPA ESARO jointly organized an online continental consultation with over 190 Youth leaders to discuss the progress and challenges in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action on the continent. The outcome document was presented to African Heads of State and will feed into the 2024 Global ICPD30 Review and the Summit of the Future discussions.

 In May 2023, UNFPA WCARO and UNFPA ESARO supported the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management in hosting the 3rd Menstrual Health Symposium. This symposium served as a platform, bringing together over 500 participants from youth-led networks, civil society, governments, and United Nations agencies across Africa to exchange ideas and experiences on the latest advancements in menstrual health, including innovative solutions to addressing persistent challenges and seizing emerging opportunities.







“

*As a young girl, it's not at all easy to raise awareness about sexuality. But with the training I've received, I'm able to express myself better with my peers. Boys and girls alike, there are no taboos, and I feel at ease on the subject of sexuality. I hold 3 to 4 awareness-raising sessions a month in secondary schools and tea bars in the town of Sabou.*

*It's my contribution to raising young people's awareness of the risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the crossroads town of Sabou.*

**Foussenatou, 18, student Burkina Faso**





# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY



UNFPA WCARO supported the establishment of the United Nations Regional Inter-agency Working Group on Youth, Peace and Security, co-led by UNFPA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This working group coordinates youth, peace and security efforts in West Africa and the Sahel region and facilitates the meaningful inclusion of young people in peace and security processes.



UNFPA, with funding support from the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), actively promoted young people and women's leadership for peace in 14 countries across West and Central Africa. The aim is to support the role of young people and women in preventing violence, building resilient communities, adapting to climate change, preventing local conflicts, strengthening relations between different groups, and fostering economic resilience, while addressing their exclusion from key platforms.



Guinea: UNFPA and partners consulted 2,400 young people on political transition processes. This led to the establishment of a National Youth Council with local and regional branches. Over 30 per cent of those elected at all levels were young girls.



The Gambia: UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF supported women's leadership and participation. In the 2023 local elections, 17 women were elected – a significant increase compared with 2018 when only seven were elected.



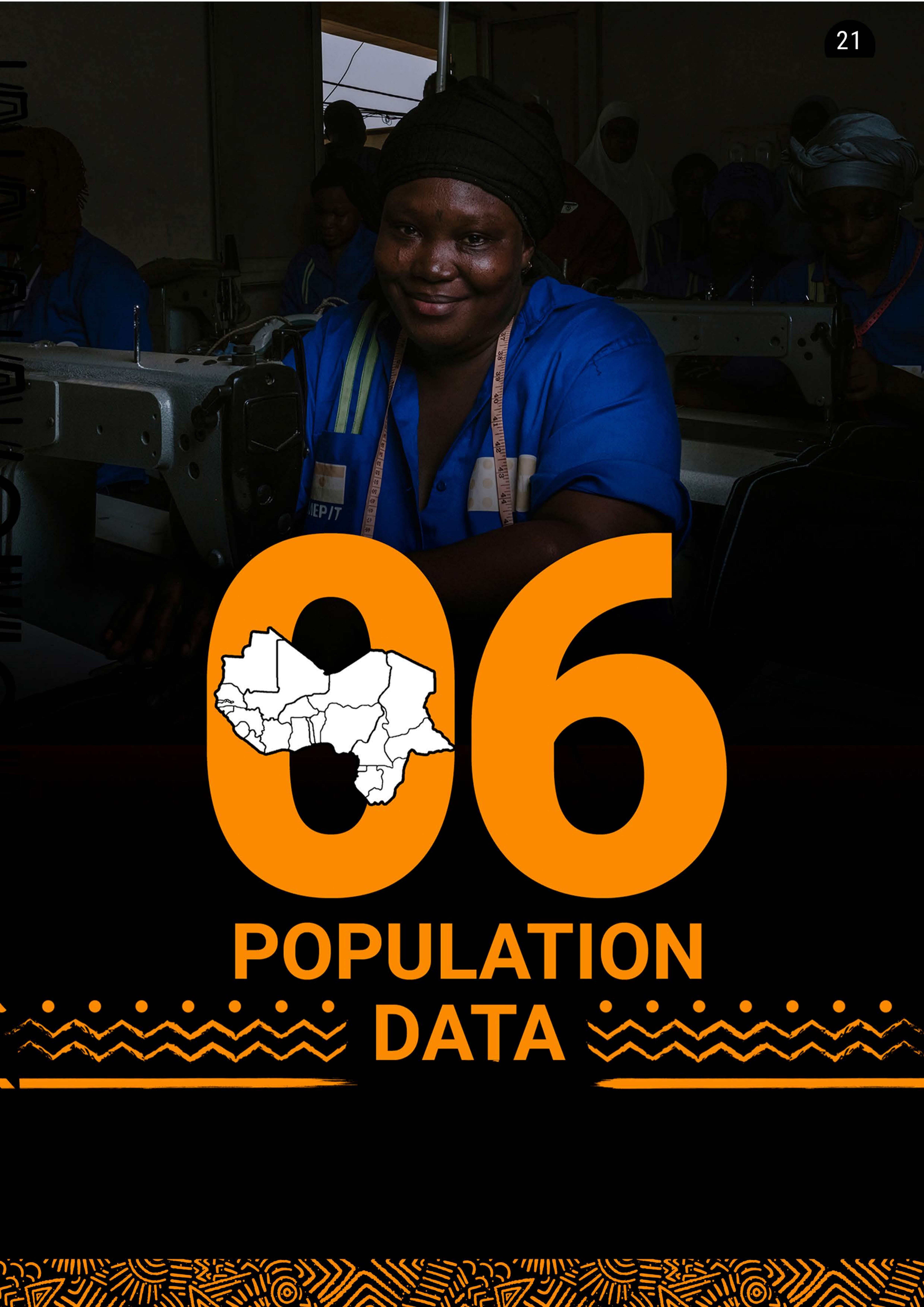
UNFPA WCARO hosted the annual meeting of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, where over 50 peacebuilding practitioners gathered to assess progress and challenges in implementing UN Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535. The action plan coming out of the meeting emphasized the need for stronger collaboration among youth-led civil society organizations (CSOs), United Nations agencies, and others.



UNFPA WCARO conducted a Training of Trainers on the development of National Action Plans on Youth Peace and Security. The training was attended by 33 participants from youth CSOs, governments, and United Nations representatives from 11 countries in West and Central Africa. As a result of the training, 10 countries have developed roadmaps towards creating their own National Action Plans. Nigeria is the only country from WCA that has already adopted a National Action Plan, providing valuable experience-sharing opportunities.







# 06

## POPULATION DATA





# POPULATION DATA

## CENSUS

UNFPA WCARO provided technical support to the Gambia and Mauritania for their census operations. In the Gambia, this support included mapping quality control and the recruitment of a Chief Technical Adviser.

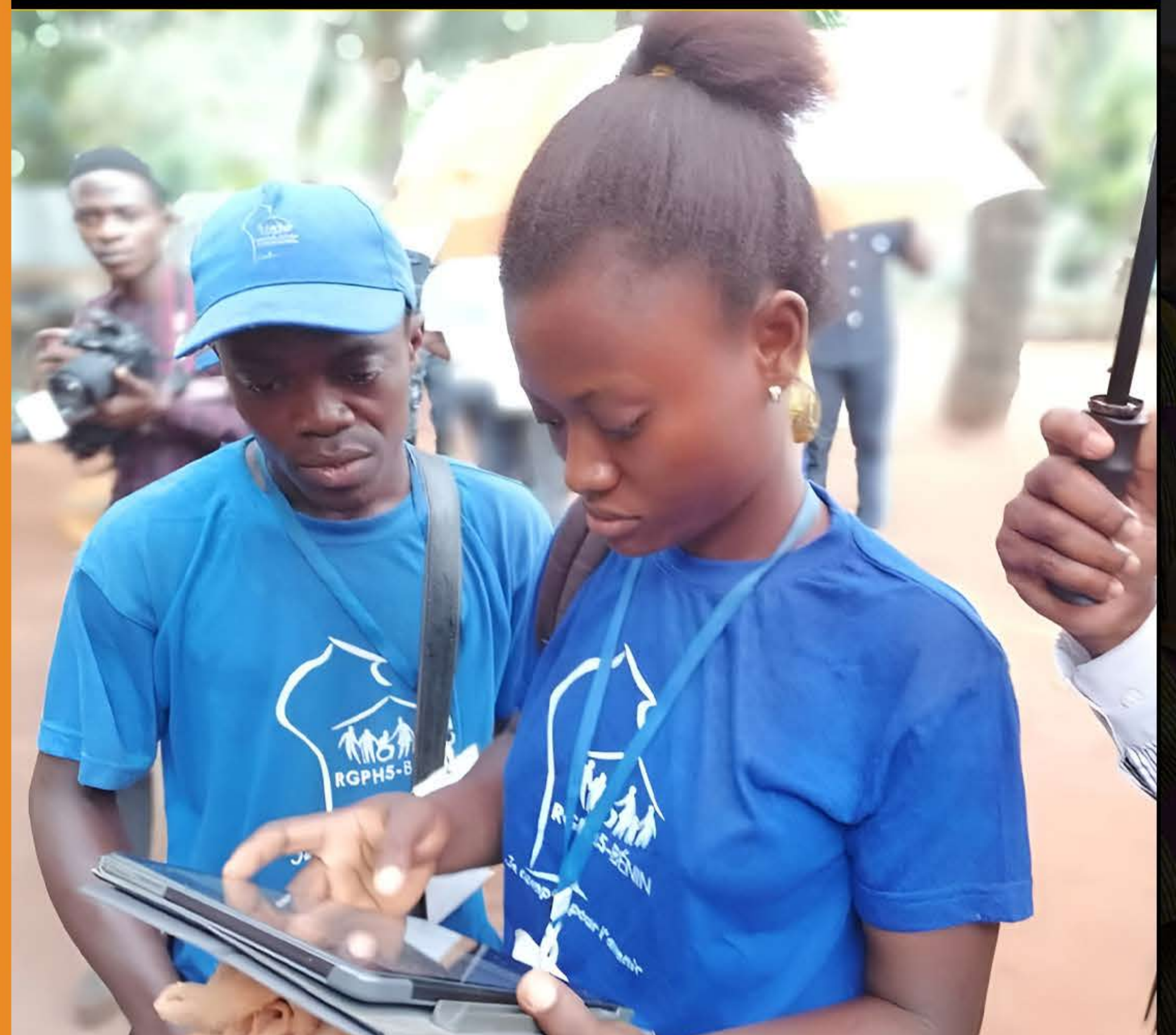
In Mauritania, successful enumeration took place from 25 December 2023 to 15 January 2024, through collaboration between UNFPA, local authorities, and ongoing post-enumeration discussions.

Côte d'Ivoire and Togo were assisted with technical support for data analysis. In Côte d'Ivoire, efforts were focused on improving local data quality and cleaning census microdata to align with United Nations standards.

In a joint initiative between UNFPA and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), 30 participants from nine countries were trained in geospatial analysis using ArcGIS. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo used the techniques learned during the sessions to carry out a needs assessment on basic amenities for efficient planning purposes. Moreover, a regional training session led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNFPA and the United States Census Bureau equipped 44 participants from national statistical offices in 16 countries with the skills to generate population projections for their respective nations. This training advanced their analytical capabilities and data interpretation skills.

## CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS

In order to support countries with their respective civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, UNFPA WCARO and ECA carried out capacity-building on the collection, cleaning, analysis, compilation and dissemination of vital events data. The training was delivered to 49 participants from 17 countries. A final assessment was conducted in order to follow up with countries on their implementation of technical recommendations in producing CRVS reports.



## PRODUCING BEST-AVAILABLE DISAGGREGATED DATA

In collaboration with the UNFPA HQ Population Development Branch (PDB), UNFPA WCARO supported Country offices and national statistical offices to make available sex-, age- and small-area-disaggregated data that can be used for humanitarian preparedness and response. 11 countries have up-to-date data, four where additional verifications are required, and three where data require further computations.

WCARO helped develop the UNFPA Population Data Portal hosting disaggregated data pertaining to the three transformative results in all UNFPA countries.





# 07

## HUMANITARIAN PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE







In 2023, West and Central Africa faced unprecedented challenges, with 67.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance across the region due to multifaceted crises and 13.4 million people forcibly displaced or stateless (UNHCR 2023; HAO 2023).



# MAIN INTERVENTIONS



In 2023, UNFPA's humanitarian interventions in West and Central Africa were strategically designed to address the multifaceted challenges faced by communities in crisis situations. Focused on a holistic approach, these interventions included preparedness and response activities in the key areas of GBV, SRH, youth, peace and security, and capacity-building. This section describes these key interventions and provides examples of work delivered in country offices in the region.

## Preparedness

UNFPA WCARO supported 21 countries with their preparedness plans entitled Minimum Action Plans. These plans provide country offices with a critical map that outlines the actions they will undertake to prepare for and respond to an emergency.

### GBV initiatives

In 2023, UNFPA addressed GBV in emergencies across Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, focusing on prevention, risk mitigation, response and coordination. The organization supported 435,243 people with quality GBV services including case management, psychosocial support, and health services for survivors of sexual violence. In total, UNFPA distributed 62,057 dignity kits and information on GBV support and services and 792,692 people were reached with awareness-raising activities and GBV-lifesaving information. Additionally, 1,969 survivors of gender-based violence received cash assistance for recovery. UNFPA engaged communities to shift norms that contribute to GBV, for example, involving religious leaders in Niger.



### Stronger support for inter-agency GBV coordination in the region

UNFPA enhanced GBV coordination in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria with cluster systems, ensuring effective Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) GBV coordination. A regional workshop improved 21 staff members' understanding and practice of GBV coordination functions, boosting collaboration between GBV inter-agency coordinators and UNFPA humanitarian coordinators. This reinforced UNFPA leadership of the GBV response in the region. Additionally, UNFPA helped establish a pool of 30 GBV experts in Chad and supported Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon in updating their GBV Standard Operating Procedures in line with 2023 global guidelines. As the lead agency for GBV emergencies, UNFPA also backed regional inter-agency initiatives and the implementation and monitoring of annual GBV strategies for 2023 and planning for 2024, focusing on protection risks in key areas such as the Central Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.





## Safe spaces for women, youths and adolescents

In regions disrupted by conflict, UNFPA operated 225 Women and Girls Safe Spaces and an additional 613 tailored to youth and adolescents. These safe spaces and centres ensure women and youth affected by humanitarian crises receive essential care, psychosocial support, information, and referrals for advanced health and protection services. In addition, women and youth engage in vocational and life skills training and income-generating activities and have a safe and friendly haven to heal and recover.



## SRH services

UNFPA improved SRH services in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria delivering SRH and GBV services to over 1.9 million individuals, facilitating 308,350 safe deliveries and providing family planning to 424,285 women and girls. UNFPA supported 506 static health facilities and 117 mobile clinics which provided integrated, high-quality SRH/GBV information and services to women and girls affected by crises. UNFPA supported health facilities with supplies, equipment, capacity-building and technical tools to enhance quality SRH and GBV service delivery. These clinics also served as key locations to receive information about SRH and GBV and safe referrals. Collaborating with local health authorities and partners, UNFPA expanded SRH access in remote areas, emphasizing safe delivery and family planning.



## Empowerment through capacity-building

**Technical Level:** In 2023, UNFPA West and Central Africa boosted capacity-building by training 587 staff in SRH, including Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) Reproductive Health in crises, and educated 1,744 partners and officials on GBV prevention and response. These efforts aimed at providing survivor-centred care and addressing the needs of women and girls, improving community resilience. Additionally, a MISP trainer programme in Benin trained 32 individuals from seven countries, and established a network of 25 MISP trainers across the region. This initiative strengthened UNFPA's commitment to enhancing SRH and GBV services and preparing communities to respond effectively to emergencies.



**Leadership Level:** In 2023, UNFPA WCARO developed a Road Map for Quality Humanitarian Actions within the Nexus Space 2023–2025. Its goal is to enhance UNFPA’s ability to effectively respond to, and prepare for, humanitarian crises in the WCA Region. Capacity building is a key action within the road map, specifically in terms of enhancing the humanitarian preparedness and response of UNFPA’s humanitarian personnel, with a focus on safeguarding the rights and welfare of women, adolescents and youth, particularly adolescent girls, who are significantly impacted by the region’s ongoing crises.

A pivotal component of the Humanitarian Roadmap was the Humanitarian Leadership Programme, which included 52 UNFPA WCA leaders including representatives, deputy representatives, operations managers and humanitarian coordinators from across the region. This initiative equipped UNFPA leaders with the essential skills and knowledge to navigate and lead effectively within the region’s complex humanitarian landscape.



## Snapshot of Results from Two Country Offices

### Burkina Faso

UNFPA in Burkina Faso played a crucial role in implementing the MISP for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Crises, providing SRH services for 326,584 women and girls and enhancing resilient health systems in crisis-affected areas. UNFPA distributed Inter-Agency Reproductive Health (IARH) kits to 99 health centers in the country, which included essential medicines, supplies and equipment. UNFPAs supported the safe delivery of 77,106 infants and 14,358 people received family planning services. In 2023, UNFPA also provided capacity building on the MISP for 409 village birth attendants and 185 SRH providers. UNFPA Burkina Faso and partners reached 41,856 people with GBV prevention, mitigation and response activities. The Country Office established four integrated One Stop centers in four humanitarian regions to provide comprehensive GBV and SRH. UNFPA and partners distributed 4,303 dignity kits to women and girls affected by the humanitarian crisis. UNFPA deployed 8 psychologists to provide essential mental health and psychosocial support services to women and girls in humanitarian zones further strengthening GBV response.

### Cameroon

UNFPA Cameroon implemented life-saving SRH and GBV services reaching a total of 583,487 people with integrated GBV/SRH services. Of these, 326,584 people were reached with SRH services including 43,242 adolescents and youths (10-24). UNFPA’s support ensured 14,536 women delivered safely in UNFPA supported health facilities. In total, 25,061 individuals accessed family planning services in UNFPA supported facilities. UNFPA Cameroon deployed 34 humanitarian midwives to provide critical comprehensive SRH services in five of the country’s ten regions, supporting women and families in challenging contexts. In total, 89,557 people were reached with GBV prevention, mitigation and response activities; 167,346 people with awareness-raising activities and lifesaving GBV information; 465 people Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for GBV case management and/or other GBV response and risk mitigation. In total, 6,725 dignity kits were distributed to women and girls impacted by the humanitarian crisis.





**FOCUS ON  
SWEDD'S  
PROJECT**





## Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)



# MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

### Communication for social and behavioural change to reinforce social transformations

- The Stronger Together campaign to promote girls' education and women's leadership reached 86 million young people through several social and traditional media channels.

**3,5 million**

people were reached through social and behavioural change communication activities (to empower women, keep girls in school, and so on) such as awareness-raising caravans.

### Keeping girls in school and empowering them

**665,390**



vulnerable girls received access to schooling support (transport services, accommodation, food, school supplies, extra tuition) to encourage their enrolment and retention in secondary school (96 per cent retention rate in secondary school).

**5,708**

safe spaces for girls are operational, training 400,760 young women and teenagers in life skills, economic empowerment, SRH, and tackling and preventing GBV.

### Strengthening positive masculinity

There were 594 functional husbands' clubs for 18,988 beneficiaries and 1,407 future husbands' clubs for 28,580 beneficiaries. These clubs implement gender-transformative programmes, thereby reducing GBV, increasing the number of prenatal visits and improving the sharing of household chores.





### High contribution to regional capacity-building and availability of reproductive, maternal, neonatal, infant and nutritional health products and health personnel

- Conducted five last-mile distribution pilot projects (Benin, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania). Identified seven best practices on health products last-mile distribution and developed country road maps for scaling up last-mile distribution.
- There were 996,679 new users of modern contraceptive methods,
- Clinical mentoring was used to upgrade the skills of 13,000 midwives.

### Strong contribution to strengthening national policies and advocacy

- 17,601 community and religious leaders were engaged to promote gender equality.
- The legal teams' platform for advocacy in nine SWEDD countries was revitalized, enabling them to share experiences and develop action plans to promote women's rights.
- Two national observatories on the demographic dividend were set up in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire to inform development of public policies for decision-making to capture the demographic dividend.







09

**RESOURCE  
MOBILIZATION  
AND STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIPS**



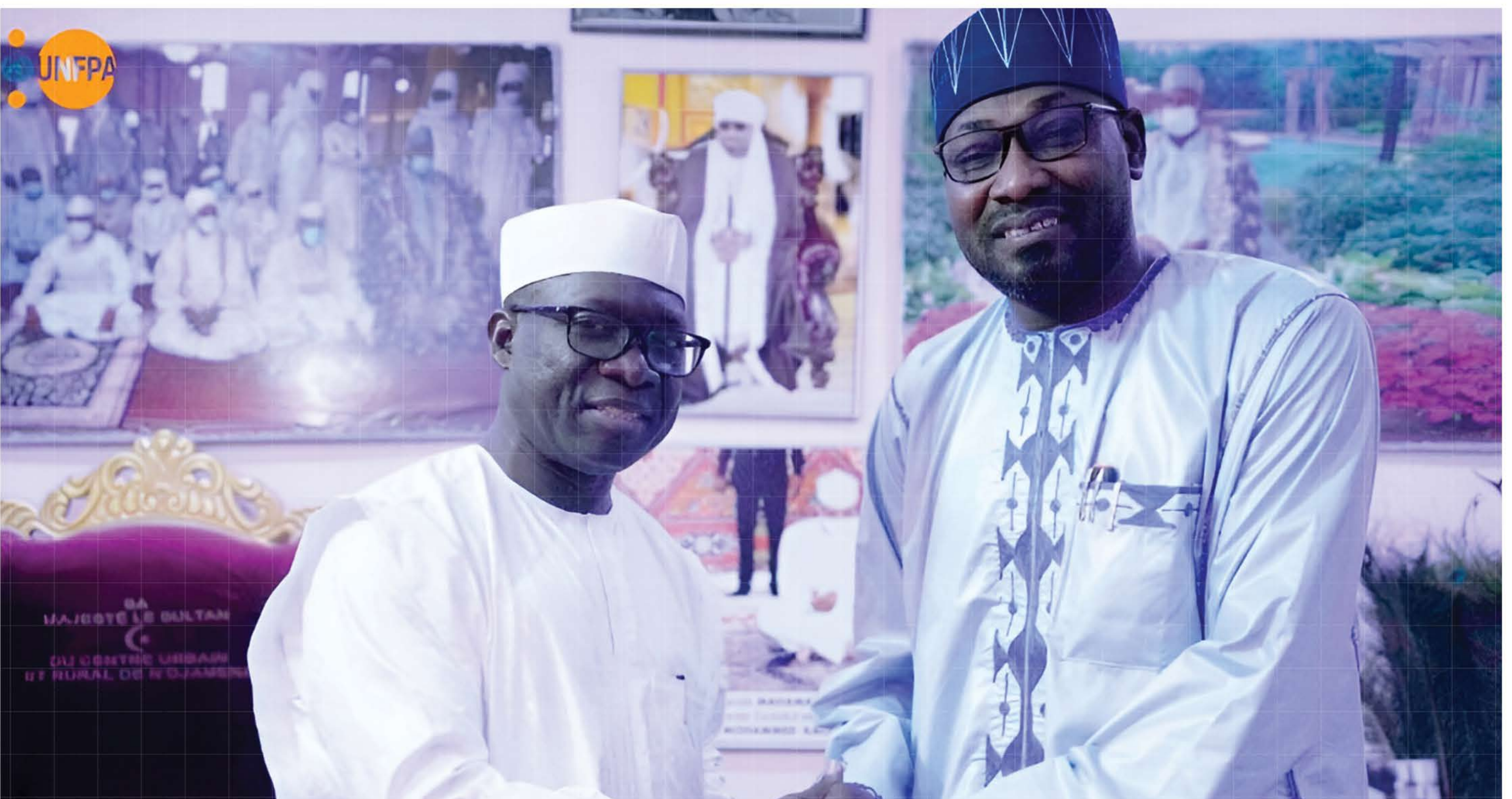




## Resource mobilization

In 2023, despite global and regional crises, security complexities, diverse donor interests and politicized aid affecting resource mobilization efforts, UNFPA in the West and Central Africa region achieved noteworthy progress. Total funds raised amounted to \$92.92 million, marking the highest figure recorded since 2021.

The majority of funding was for development projects (79 per cent compared with 21 per cent for humanitarian programmes) and the main overall contributors were donor governments, United Nations entities and programme countries, mainly through contributions from international financial institutions.







## Strategic Partnerships

UNFPA WCARO established strategic alliances with United Nations entities in the Sahel to enhance prosperity and peace and to advocate for the rights and choices of women and girls in the region. Collaborating with **UNDP**, gender and stabilization roundtables were conducted in December 2023 to enhance the integration of gender issues in the new **stabilization programmes** for Lake Chad and the Liptako-Gourma regions, with a focus on enhancing women and youth leadership. UNFPA is also a key partner of the **United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS)**, contributing specifically to the governance and resilience pillars.



In partnership with **Avenir Health**, an impact assessment of the Ouagadougou Partnership Matching Fund Initiative was conducted. Preliminary results were presented at the December 2023 Ouagadougou Partnership annual meeting, showcasing some of the results achieved in domestic resource mobilization for reproductive health/family planning commodities.







## WE THANK OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

We thank our donors and partners for the steadfast support towards our work in West and Central Africa. Your support continues to greatly improve the well-being of millions of women and girls across the region.







# 10



## INNOVATION







## INNOVATION

WCARO continues to invest in innovative SRH solutions, and in 2023 we positively impacted over 5 million individuals through our wide range of innovation projects. Our strategy supports both internal and external solutions, ranging from high-tech solutions such as artificial intelligence-(AI) powered platforms, to low-tech interventions for community engagement, and strategic partnerships with global and local entities. These varied approaches underscore our commitment to leveraging technology and collaboration to address the unique challenges facing the communities we serve.



### **The Tech Innovation Board partnership between UNFPA and Google**

In 2023, WCARO initiated an innovative partnership with Google. The Tech Innovation Board is a multidisciplinary team of maternal health and technology experts. This collaboration aimed at leveraging Google's technological prowess to advance UNFPA transformative goals in West and Central Africa.

Three workstreams were developed: behavioural insights, tech education, and novel technologies. These initiatives have made significant strides, including incorporating behavioural economics into advocacy campaigns, supporting the Tech4Youth programme and initiating scoping studies for the deployment of AI-powered ultrasound devices in humanitarian settings. The partnership's success was recognized by the UNFPA Innovation Award in December 2023.



### **Medtracka App AI-powered e-pharmacy**

Through the 4HerPower Challenge, UNFPA partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Organon to support Medvax Health, Nigeria's pioneering women-centric e-pharmacy. They won the challenge with their Medtracka App, which ensures SRH commodity security. The app targets young women, offering them a platform to access a broad range of health products discreetly. By partnering with over 60 local pharmacies and leveraging AI for logistics, Medtracka ensures the swift delivery of over 5,000 quality health products, including family planning and menstrual health items. This innovation stands out by providing a one-stop digital solution for affordable, authentic SRH commodities and services.





**HIGH-LEVEL  
EVENTS**

**2023**





## Advancing peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin region

From 5 to 7 July, the West and Central Africa Regional Director, Dr. Sennen Hounton, participated in the Fourth Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, held in N'djamena, Chad. The theme was New Opportunities for Peace in a Shifting Security Context. The forum was organized under the leadership of the Transitional President of Chad, His Excellency Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno. The Regional Director's participation in this forum re-affirmed the criticality of SRHR as a key component in harnessing the demographic dividend and supporting efforts towards lasting peace in the Lake Chad Basin region.



## Ten-year anniversary of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (AADPD), a framework that localizes the ICPD Programme of Action for the continent.

Twenty-three countries from the West and Central Africa region produced a national review report on the AADPD+10. These national reports fed into the continental report presented at the AADPD+10 review meeting under the auspices of the AU Commission, 42 Members States, UNFPA and ECA in Lusaka, Zambia, from 7 to 10 November 2023. The AADPD+10 continental report was approved, and its outcome supports the preparation of the fifty-seventh Commission on Population and Development, the Summit of the Future, and any other intergovernmental event. Civil society partners were engaged in the review process through two continental online preparatory consultations organized by WCARO and ESARO for youth-led organizations and for CSOs/major groups, and followed by an in-person consultation in Lusaka on the eve of the formal review meeting. Among key issues, CSO partners highlighted the shrinking civic space and the need for further access to leadership spaces, structures and processes for civil society, especially youth.



## Regional Leadership Meeting, Cotonou in Benin

Managers from the countries and regional offices of the West and Central Africa region took advantage of the Regional Leadership Meeting to deliberate on progress that has been made in the implementation of the regional strategic plan. From the 15th to 17th of March 2023, under the leadership of the former Regional Director, senior managers of the UNFPA 23 countries convened in Cotonou, Benin, to discuss and collaborate on strategic approaches and actions that will propel the region towards a transformative stage in their economic and social development.





**GIRLS**

**Have**

**A**

**RIGHT**

**TO**

**Be**

# 12



**OUTLOOK AND  
PRIORITIES  
FOR 2024**







UNFPA in the West and Central Africa region





A midterm review of the regional programme was conducted in 2023 to assess progress made in the region and identify lessons learned to inform the strategy for the two remaining years (2024–2025) of the programme. Consequently, UNFPA WCARO has identified four priority areas for 2024:

## 1 Centrality of population for peace, people, prosperity and planet in the West and Central Africa region.

UNFPA WCARO will focus on strengthening the integration of megatrends such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities and digitalization into programming by positioning itself as a lead on population and data.

## 2 Specific and tailored technical assistance for middle-income countries and small business units.

As a small number of countries have advanced to middle-income country (MIC) status and seen a reduction in funding for SRHR, there is a need to establish innovative technical support approaches in certain MICs as well as in joint and small business units in the West and Central Africa region. This will be achieved by establishing a multi-country expertise hub through which the region will provide differentiated and specialized technical and programme advisory support to country offices.

## 3 Fit-for-purpose humanitarian preparedness and response.

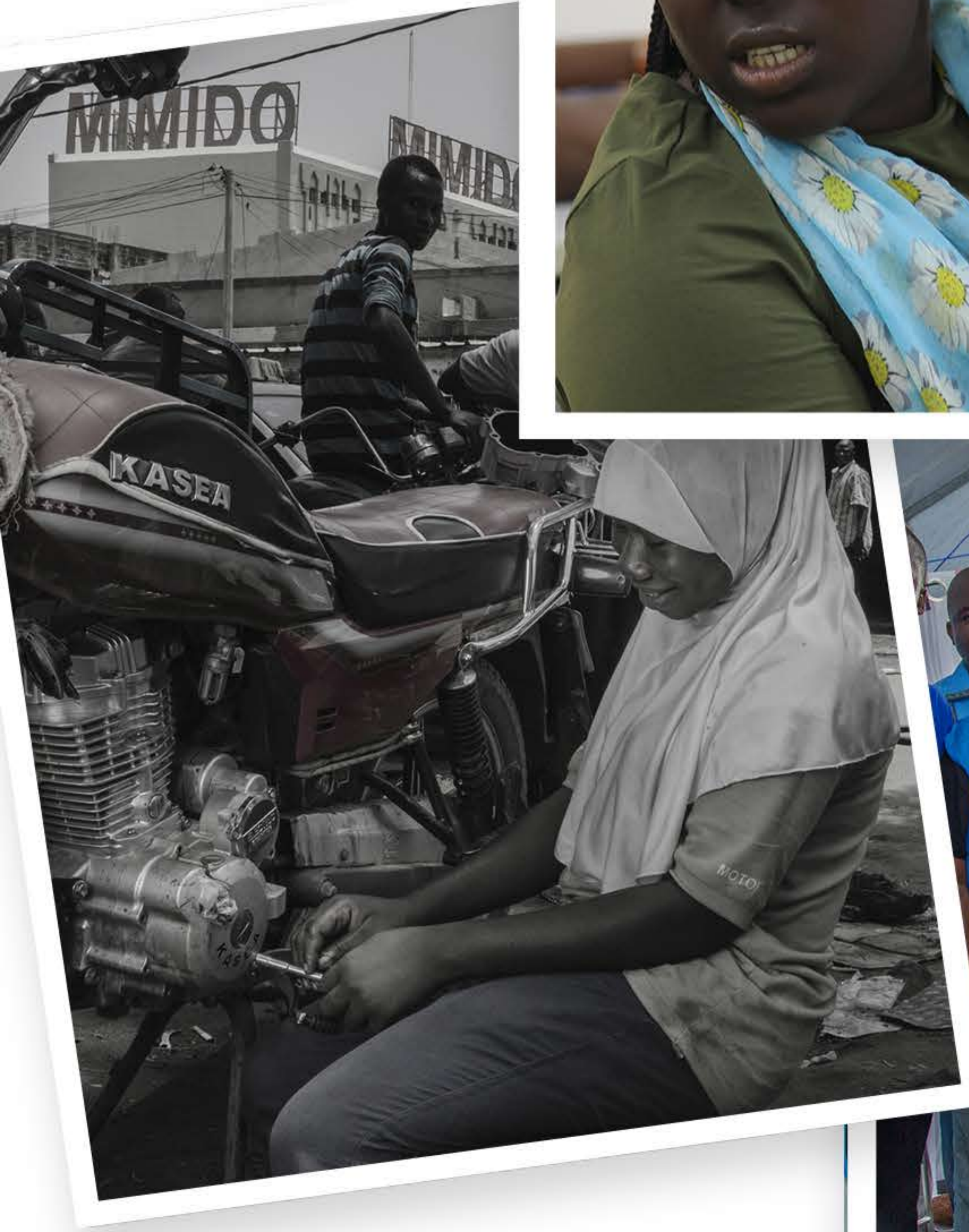
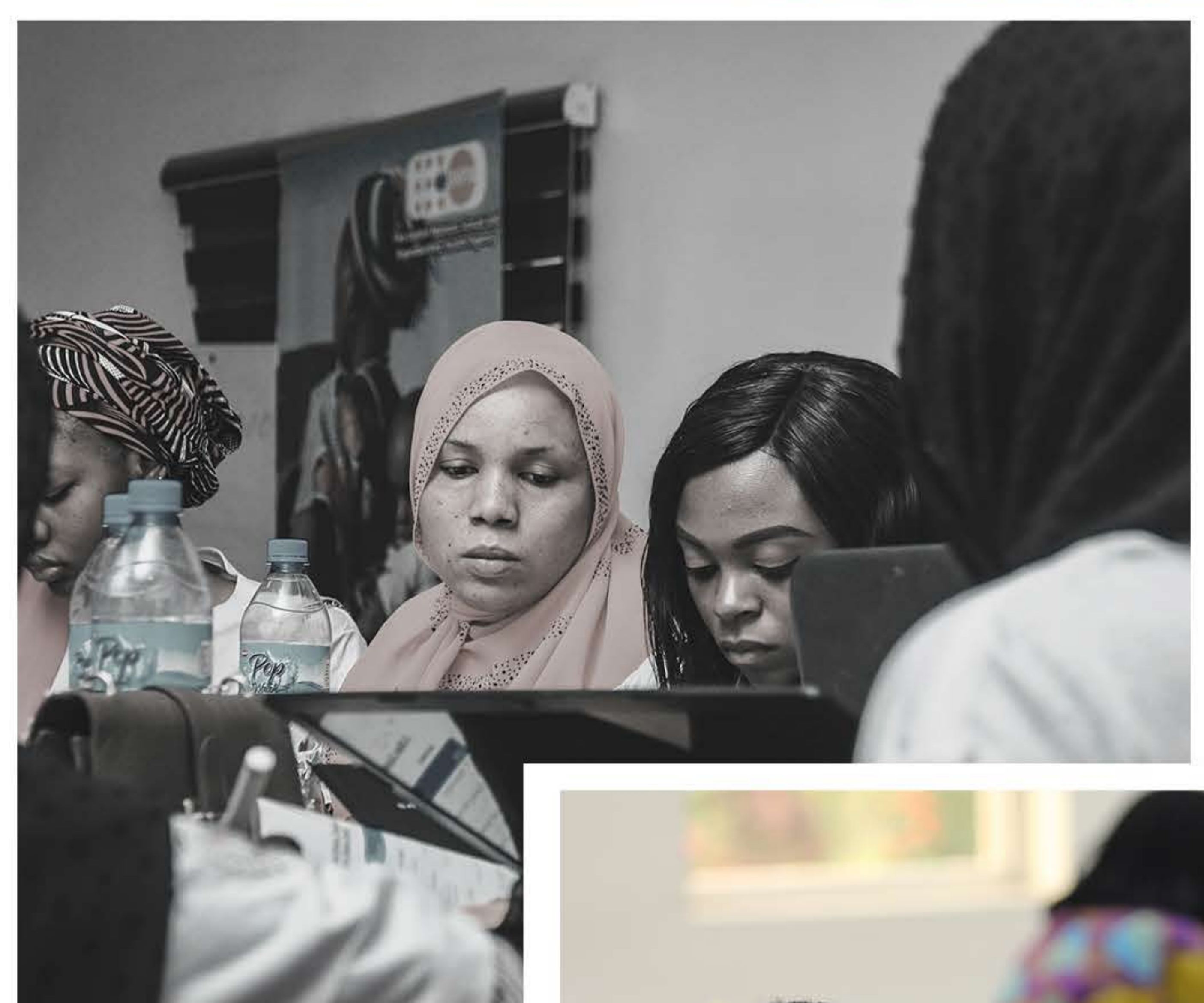
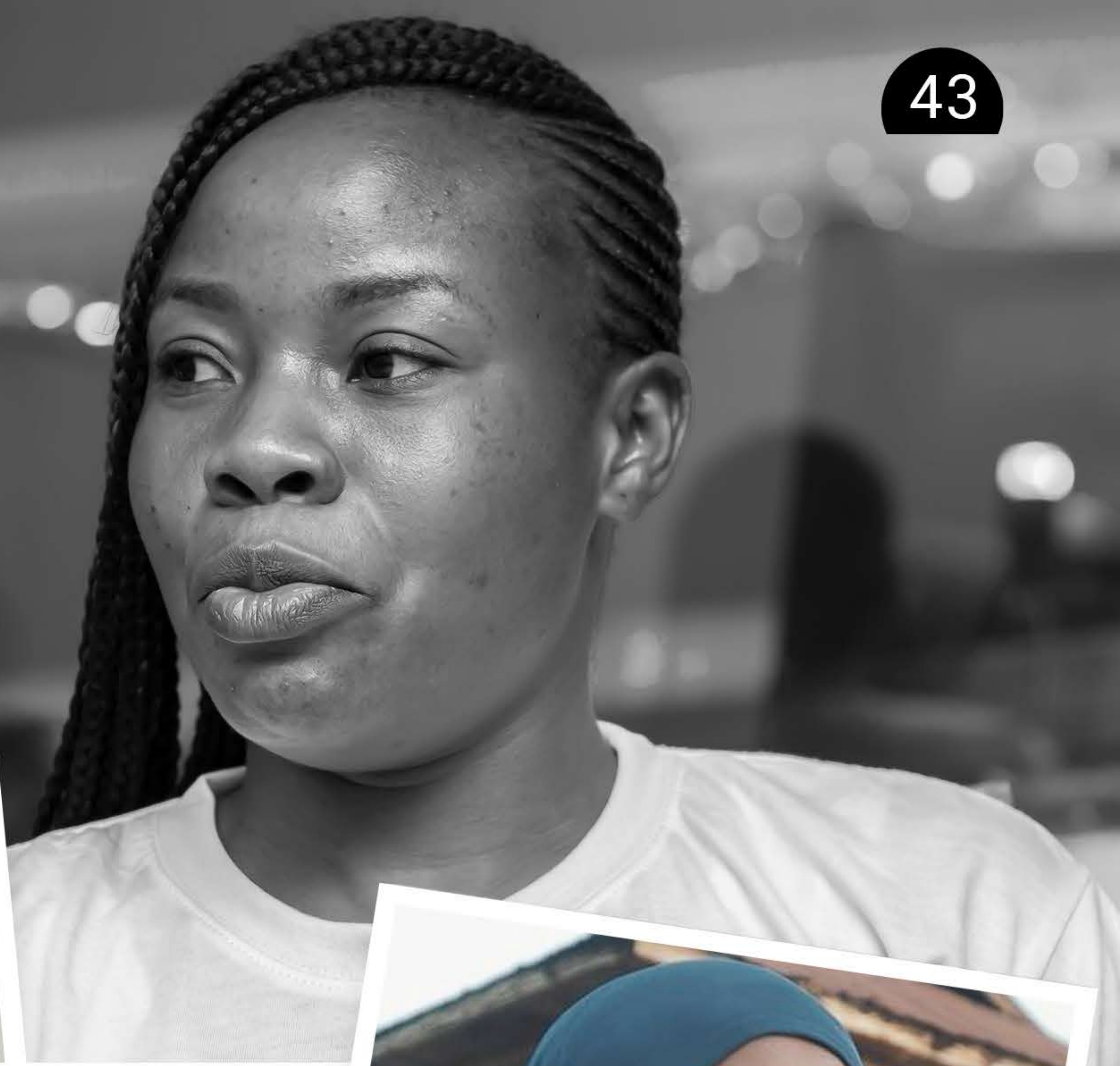
UNFPA WCARO will strengthen UNFPA's capacity in humanitarian and emergency settings, including at the leadership level, to scale up preparedness actions, and its leadership in SRHiE, GBViE, data in humanitarian settings, youth, peace and security (YPS) and women, peace and security (WPS). This regional initiative will have a leverage effect on resource mobilization in the region.

## 4 Scale-up of capacity strengthening and technical assistance for country offices and partners in the region.

The regional office will continue to offer direct high-quality technical assistance through innovative and hybrid modalities, including in-country missions, remote missions, peer-to-peer networks and facilitating regional training sessions. UNFPA WCARO will scale up management and oversight of core and non-core resources, with an emphasis on strengthening procurement, finance and administration.











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