

UNFPA WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME 2023



Country leadership teams reinforce their capacity to better prepare and respond in any emergency

The situation our leaders are facing now

- **The West and Central Africa** region is witnessing an **increase in multi-faceted crises ranging from public health to political, socio-economic and climate related emergencies**, which particularly affect women and girls. More and more are **needing to have their protection and reproductive health needs addressed urgently**, in a safe and dignified manner.
- UNFPA WCAR country leadership teams are increasingly called upon to reorient and better prepare themselves for humanitarian action, and equally be able to deliver with confidence and accountability.
- Leaders must project credibility for the organization by engaging partners, positioning UNFPA in the right spaces, and negotiating humanitarian programmes on behalf of affected populations, while managing reputational risks and mobilizing resources for life saving needs.
- It is increasingly important for leaders to have the know-how and confidence to work across the triple nexus approach: Humanitarian-Peace-Development.



What were the objectives of the Regional Humanitarian Leadership Programme?

- **Ensure UNFPA WCA region leaders' knowledge of the overarching humanitarian system and structure is deepened and strengthened.** This includes capacity to effectively contribute to key coordination bodies; identifying where UNFPA fits in this system today, in different contexts and its specific leadership accountabilities, especially around our GBV Area of Responsibility (AOR). Consideration of WCAR-specific context and its implications on UNFPA as a credible humanitarian actor operating in the Region.
- **Support the leaders to more effectively position, represent and advocate** for UNFPA's mandate in a tighter humanitarian space, with limited resources, amongst both traditional and new actors.
- **Deepen UNFPA country leadership's understanding of UNFPA's humanitarian processes, programmes; and** how our leadership teams can ensure these are adequately managed and remain response ready; how each of the country leadership roles are interconnected and reinforce one another from preparedness to active response phases.
- **Learn from one another** – the HLP ensures participants and facilitators are able to share experiences in a safe environment and contribute to building a regional network of humanitarian leaders that promotes sustained community of practice.

"We are one of the most effervescent regions in the world in times of crises, and this workshop highlighted our need for preparedness so that we can respond better."





How does it work ?

Modeled on the UNFPA Humanitarian Response Division workshop programme, yet adjusted to regional specific needs and contexts, this workshop was a first for the Region. This UNFPA-specific practical training organized by UNFPA WCARO covered both theory and scenario-based simulation exercises.

- The **five-day in-person workshop** employed a **diverse range of learning methodologies**. This included plenary and panel discussions, case studies, group work, role plays designed for behavioral skill-building, and carousel sessions focusing on programmatic and operational content.
- Facilitators were carefully selected for their subject matter expertise, their extensive experience in different humanitarian contexts; all having either worked previously, or currently work for UNFPA, which was highly appreciated by participants.
- During the workshops, participants also enhanced their skills in contingency planning and preparedness. The training then delved deep into UNFPA's humanitarian programming and operations, with a focus on the specific accountabilities of country leadership teams to ensure these are managed well and remain ready and responsive.
- HLP dedicated time to enhancing the leadership skills for the exercise of UNFPA's coordination mandate for GBV Area of Responsibility and SRH in the broader humanitarian architecture. Effective communication and negotiation skills in emergencies were addressed and linked with the ability of the organization to mobilize and manage donor resources.
- A simulation placed participants into a real-time humanitarian emergency situation set in a fictitious Country, whose context was drawn from regional realities. Under

- pressure to respond quickly, teams were required to advocate on behalf of UNFPA's mandate with different humanitarian actors, in a shrinking humanitarian space whilst upholding the humanitarian principles. This included undertaking complex and sensitive conversations with state and non-state actors, civil society organizations, other UN agencies, as well as media. The scenario also called for rapidly preparing various pieces of work they would typically encounter in a heightened emergency response whilst working at UNFPA, including an emergency response plan and requests for funding from key donors, to ensure life saving services for both women and girls.
- The final day dedicated time for participant and facilitator feedback, as well as interactive discussions on post workshop support and how to integrate learning back into country office operations. Key recommendations and messaging are now being used to directly enhance the UNFPA WCAR Humanitarian Roadmap and related products that work to strengthen both capacity and overall delivery of humanitarian interventions in the region in a sustained manner.
- This approach ensured a holistic and immersive learning experience, equipping participants with practical skills and knowledge for effective humanitarian leadership tailored to both UNFPA and regional realities.





[Video
link
here](#)



That's where the originality of this training is

Where and who?

The workshops held during 13-17 and 20-24 November 2023, in Dakar, Senegal, brought together **53 senior UNFPA WCARO staff in Dakar**.

The workshops targeted: Country Representatives, Deputy Representatives and/or Assistant Representatives, Humanitarian Coordinators, International Operations and/or Operations Managers.

The capacity of the workshop participants was mixed which made for a **dynamic and rich experience**; with a proportion of participants having extensive experience within UNFPA, others who had recently joined the organization, and a mix of both experienced humanitarian professionals, and newcomers to the humanitarian field.



Participant feedback

“For all the Reps, the challenges we are facing are growing and are multifaceted. Half of the leaders are in their first-time position as Representatives. Some of them have not led complex settings or humanitarian settings. So we felt that this [training] was paramount to make sure that they were equipped with the skills and the competencies to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow in this region.” - **Dr Sennen Hounton, UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa**



“Given what is ongoing in our Region, it was really a timely training. It was very comprehensive, bringing in theory, practice and concrete sharing of experiences. I think the simulation exercise was truly great. I particularly appreciated all the challenges that were coming and you had to respond in a quick and in an efficient manner. So I particularly enjoyed the training and found it extremely useful.” - **Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative, Equatorial Guinea**



“I strongly recommend this training for any Representative, any management team. This is not just theoretical training; we had a simulation and I think that's the key, moving from theory to practice. We know that today no country is free from emergencies. You can have flooding from climate change, you can have droughts, and we have that in Benin. The day has been wonderful, it has been stressful, but it tells you exactly what to expect and why it is important.” - **Richmond Tiemoko, UNFPA Representative, Benin**



“Most of our facilitators were actually Representatives themselves, current or ex, and have been in these situations and have managed programmes and I think hearing from them, their real life examples just makes the training much more practical and realistic. Just understanding the complexity, how much stress is involved, what are the various things that, as a Representative, you have to think about.” - **Bidisha Pillai, UNFPA Representative, Liberia**

