

UNFPA (WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA) REGIONAL PROGRAMME EVALUATION



EVALUATION REPORT
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UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CM	Child Marriage
CPD	Country Program Document
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EMoNC	Emergency Obstetric and New-born Care
EQAA	Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
FP	Family Planning
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GTA	Gender Transformative Approaches
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HDP	Humanitarian Development Peace nexus
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HP	Harmful Practices
HQ	Headquarters
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Knowledge Management
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
LIC	Low Income Country
LMIC	Lower Middle-Income Country
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package
MRA	MISP Readiness Assessment
MNH	Maternal Neonatal Health
MTR	Mid-Term Review
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSD	Policy and Strategy Division
PWD	People Living With Disability
SBC	Social and Behaviour Change
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SWEDD	Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend
RM	Resource Mobilization
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
RPE	Regional Program Evaluation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

SIARP	Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SP	Strategic Plan
SPE	Strategic Plan Evaluation
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
TA	Technical Assistance
ToR	Terms of Reference
UMIC	Upper Middle-Income Country
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Program
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality & the Empowerment of Women
WAHO	West African Health Organization
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office

About this report

This report is organized into seven sections:

[Chapter 1](#) introduces the subject of the evaluation as well as its scope, purpose and objectives.

[Chapter 2](#) provides the context; including the broader West and Central Africa (WCA) development context, the status of the Three Transformative Results (3TRs), an overview of the UNFPA Strategic Plan (SP) and Regional Program (2022-2025), as well as of progress reported through an internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This chapter also defines and distinguishes accelerators and strategic shifts.

[Chapter 3](#) provides an overview of the methodology used and study limitations, with more detailed information on the methodology provided in Annex 7.

[Chapter 4](#) presents the findings of the evaluation. The findings are organized under four evaluation questions and twenty sub-questions.

[Chapter 5](#) presents conclusions drawn from the findings.

[Chapter 6](#) presents recommendations based on the findings and conclusions.

[Chapter 7](#) contains annexes such as country mission summaries, deep dive reports, detailed findings for sub-question in EQ2, 3 and 4, the evaluation matrix, detailed methodology, the summary terms of reference (ToR), list of persons interviewed, documents reviewed, evaluation reference group and management group ToR, ethical principles, data collection tools and the evidence database.

Introduction

1. As part of the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Strategic Plan Formative Evaluation 2022-2025, an independent evaluation team, in collaboration with the West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) has conducted this **Formative Evaluation of the West and Central Africa (WCA) Regional Program**, referred to as the Regional Program Evaluation (RPE) hereafter. This evaluation sought to complement ongoing evaluations in the other five UNFPA Regional Offices, the internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNFPA Strategic Plan (SP) 2022-2025, and the global Strategic Plan Evaluation (SPE).

Context

2. The 2022-2025 WCA Regional Program is being implemented within an external context characterized by several factors, including the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability accompanied by armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, food insecurity, macroeconomic volatility, an increase in events related to climate and environmental change, a global rise in conservative values and a shift in donor priorities limiting resources in the region. These challenges hinder the region's ability to make substantial progress toward the 3TRs. Although some progress has been made, including increased contraceptive use, reduced adolescent birth rates, and declines in rates of child marriage and FGM, these gains remain fragile, and significant effort is required for WCA to achieve the 2030 targets.

Purpose, Objective, Scope, Intended Users

3. The purpose of the RPE was to provide evidence to support UNFPA WCARO's learning related to what works (and what does not) to accelerate progress towards achievement of the three Transformative Results (3TRs): ending the unmet need for family planning (FP), preventable maternal deaths, gender-based violence (GBV) and Harmful Practices (HP). The RPE will inform the remaining period of the current Regional Program (2022-2025) as well as the design of the next Strategic Plan and Regional Program (2026-2029).

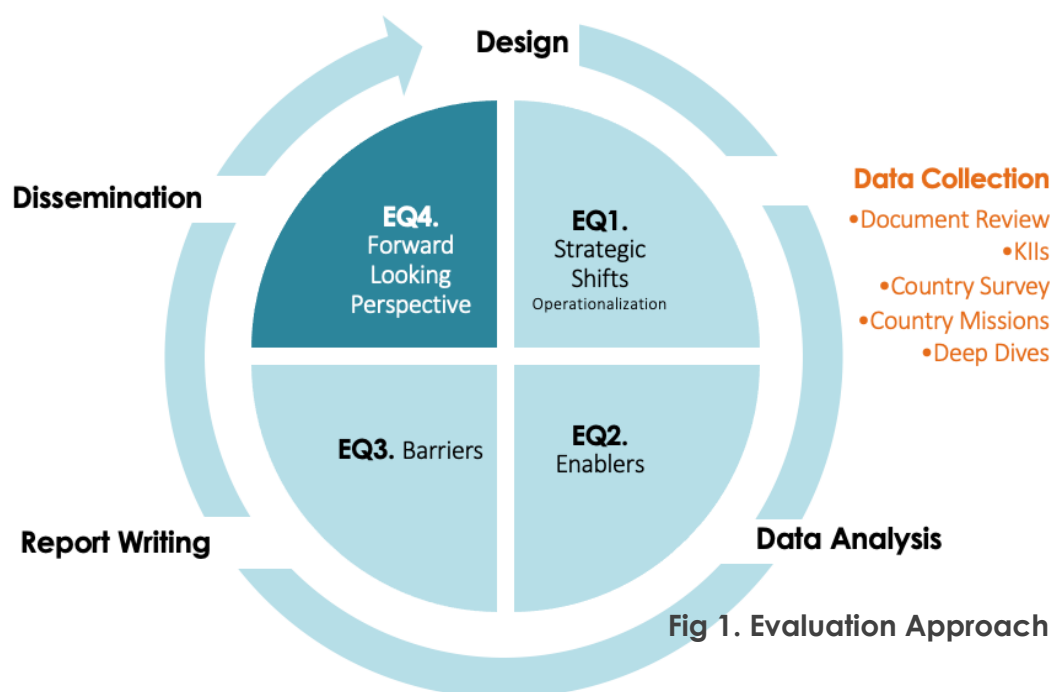
4. The objective was to assess UNFPA WCARO's **organizational readiness and strategic positioning to accelerate progress** towards the achievement of the 3TRs. New elements introduced in this Strategic Plan were the focus – namely, the **accelerators for change and the strategic shifts**. The analytical framework for this RPE was focused on gaining a better understanding of the strategic shifts and accelerators, including their relevance, operationalization and use to enhance programming (Evaluation Question 1), enablers (EQ2), barriers (EQ3), and the implications of these on future planning and programming (EQ4), within the context of a formative evaluation.¹ The evaluation was conducted from March to September 2024.

5. The primary intended users of the evaluation are: (i) UNFPA WCA Regional Office and (ii) WCA Country Offices, (iii) UNFPA senior management; (iv) the UNFPA Policy and Strategy

¹ The RPE prioritized 9 strategic shifts and/or accelerators, as defined in the RPE ToR, and these have been confirmed in consultation with the WCARO to be the most relevant and in scope for this RPE. See Fig 2.

Division; (v) the UNFPA Technical Division; (vi) the UNFPA Humanitarian Office; and (vii) (iv) the UNFPA Policy and Strategy business units at headquarters. The results of the evaluation should also be of interest to a wider group of stakeholders, such as UNFPA Executive Board members and other UN organizations.

6. **SCOPE:** The evaluation will focus on the current Strategic Plan period starting in 2022 until the end of data collection in mid-year 2024. A forward-looking perspective will be maintained so that the evaluation results will benefit both the remainder of the current Strategic Plan and the development of the subsequent one.



Methods

The RPE utilized **mixed-methods**, including: A regional survey of all 23 countries in the region. Key informant interviews with UNFPA personnel across WCARO, Country Offices and Business Units in Headquarters (HQ), and external stakeholders at the regional level. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with select country representatives and deputy representatives as well as regional social and gender norms experts. Country Missions to Mali and Ghana. Desk Review of key documents. Deep Dives focused on two priority challenges for WCARO: Addressing Discriminatory Social and Gender Norms; and Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Capacity.

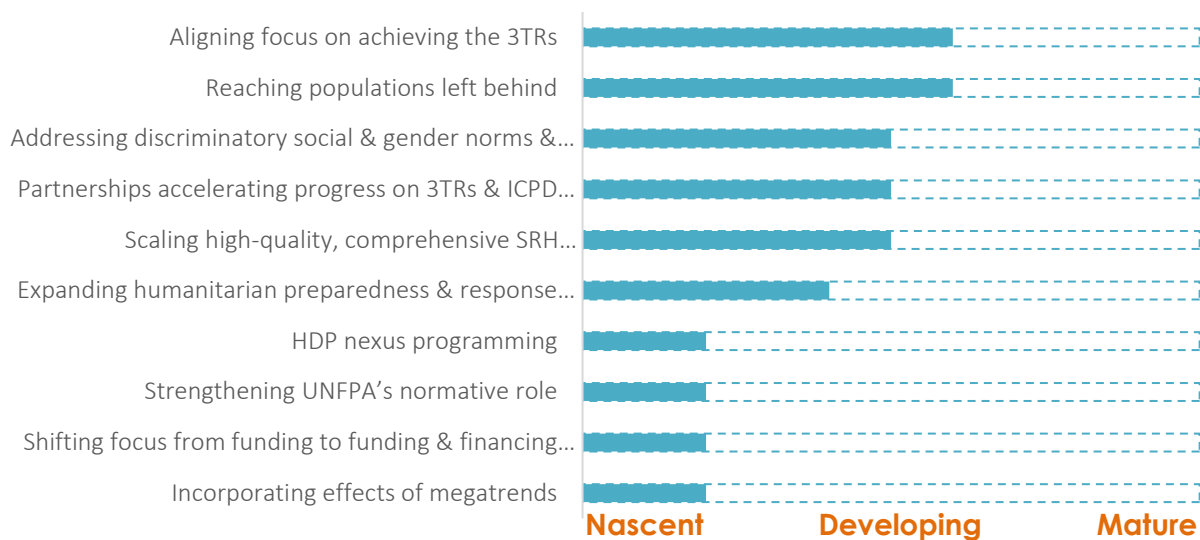
Findings

6. The RPE team established an operationalization progress rating for strategic shifts/accelerators. Ratings are either nascent, developing, or mature, based on the incorporation of strategic shifts/accelerators in relevant plans, available capacity to operationalize them, implementation of activities that indicate operationalization, and gaps in operationalization. See progress rating for strategic shifts/accelerators in [Fig 2](#) overleaf.

7. **The RPE found that all strategic shifts and accelerators introduced in the 2022-2025 Regional Program are relevant and especially needed in WCA, with the region lagging behind on all 3TRs,**

compared to other regions. In addition, the focus on expanding humanitarian preparedness and

Fig 2. RPE Strategic Shifts Progress Rating



response capacity, addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, and reaching the most vulnerable populations ("Leave No One Behind") are critical given the region's complex challenges. In order to operationalize the shifts, WCARO led a process to clearly define the strategic shifts, through the production of a set of eight acceleration papers to effectively steer the regional program. Also, the majority of countries have defined and unpacked strategic shifts/accelerators in their recent CPDs, implementation and monitoring plans. However, the levels of operationalization of strategic shifts/accelerators vary at both regional and country levels with significant barriers faced, particularly due to resource constraints and capacity gaps.

8. The 3TRs alignment, and the Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) accelerators/strategic shifts have been better implemented than other strategic shifts across countries in the region, although still developing areas.

- **UNFPA WCARO and its Country Office's planning and programming are now fully aligned to the 3TRs**, with new capacity and partnerships to incorporate and implement this accelerator largely in place. However, resource limitations challenge full implementation across all 3TRs, and there are opportunities to better integrate population and data to amplify programming across the three result areas.
- **The LNOB and Human Rights analysis tool deployed by UNFPA HQ and WCARO as well as other country-specific processes have enabled systematic planning and implementation of LNOB.** Countries are utilizing specialised Implementing Partners (IPs), tailored interventions/delivery models, and policy advocacy to better reach marginalized populations. However, there are gaps in analysis, especially in better assessing intersectionality, and reaching some population groups e.g. People Living With Disability (PWD).

9. Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) response scale-up, strengthening partnerships, and expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity, are also developing areas with ongoing work in these areas being improved or scaled up.

- **Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms is likely the most critical accelerator in the WCA region:** a clear underlying factor limiting 3TRs progress. This accelerator has been largely operationalized with recent strategic plans increasing emphasis and better defining

its operationalization, with a focus on integration and a holistic multi-sectoral service delivery approach. Gaps here include inconsistencies in integration, especially in non-health sectors, a notable absence of social norms specialists, and a need to further strengthen partnerships with Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) expert organizations. There are also additional program adaptations required to accelerate progress, mostly related to community entry approaches and further Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) analysis. [See Annex 2 Deep Dive on Addressing Discriminatory Social and Gender Norms](#) for more detail.

- **Scaling up human rights-focused SRH services and GBV response is seen more as an output than a strategic shift, with several ongoing activities to scale up services prior to this Regional Program period.** In an era of constrained resources, scaling up services is relying more on systems strengthening endeavours, e.g. strategy and guidelines development, health worker training, integration of services within UNFPA's mandate areas into broader health systems, as well as implementation partnerships with Country Governments, and other UN agencies.
- **WCARO and its COs already have an extensive network of implementation partnerships,** with effective collaboration with other regions through South-South and Triangular Cooperation frameworks, and strong relationships with other related UN agencies through joint programs. Partnerships are mostly through donor-recipient relationships, and not necessarily strategic. UNFPA's positioning in coordination platforms needs to be strengthened, to enable increased visibility and influence collaboration initiatives to better capture its mandate areas. Fundraising challenges in the region have prompted a need for new funding partners e.g. Private sector partners, with minimal progress. UNFPA's partnership approach may also be too prescriptive to IPs and will benefit from increased involvement of partners in strategy development processes. Acceleration requires a shift from focusing only on traditional implementation partnerships to more strategic relationships that will strengthen UNFPA's positioning and influence.
- **Expanding humanitarian preparedness & response capacity is urgently required, with increasing crises in the region (Sahel countries).** A road map and steering committee are already in place, with this strategic shift clearly articulated in country CPDs and preparedness plans, and there has been notable progress in operationalization, with, increasing coordination efforts, the establishment of partnerships, response activities, and preparedness planning. Humanitarian capacity is also growing in the region, with increases in personnel numbers, country coverage, pools of experts and trainings provided, however, there are still personnel gaps, the pools of experts (SURGE and GERT) do not adequately meet the needs of a region with acute protracted crises. There are also funding constraints, linked to limited humanitarian donor interest and an over-reliance on UNFPA's core funds.

10. The other accelerators/strategic shifts: the Funding to Funding and Financing (F2FF) agenda, Strengthening UNFPA's Normative Role, HDP nexus programming, and Integrating the Effects of Megatrends, are still nascent in the region, with urgent capacity needs to effectively utilize these accelerators/strategic shifts. WCARO's support is lower here compared to other strategic shifts, except for the humanitarian strategic shift.

- New activities are gradually being rolled out to implement the F2FF agenda, but there is still some ambiguity and differing interpretations of F2FF, with some resistance to the agenda, coupled with limited technical capacity. The main success story of implementing the F2FF agenda is the remarkable progress in the signing of the COMPACT agreement in the past year, with a sizeable number of countries in the region achieving their minimum contribution

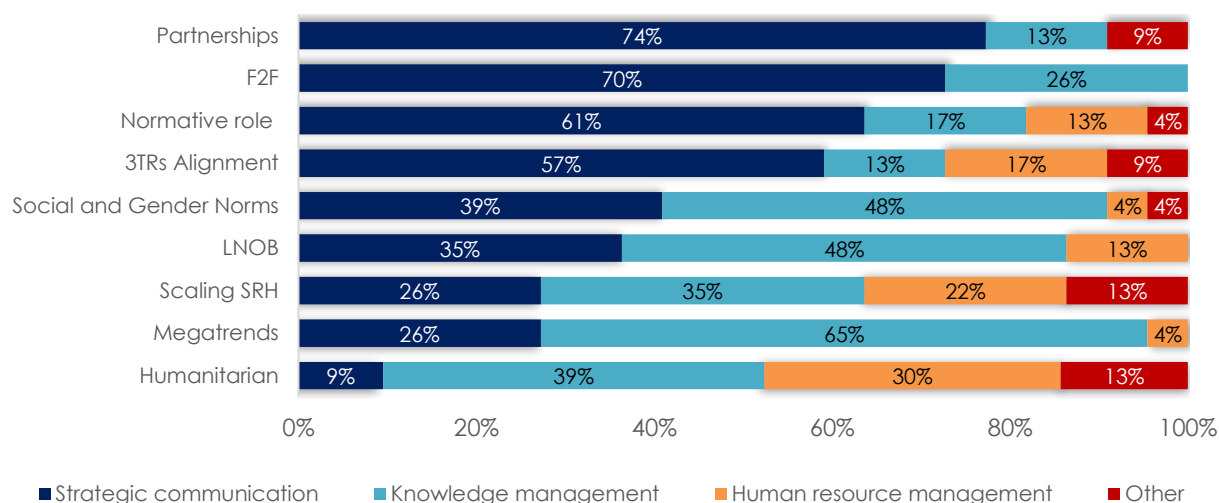
requirement for FP supplies, and/or budget lines created for the procurement of RH commodities.

- Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role is becoming increasingly important with shrinking ODA, stronger leadership by country governments and rapidly changing political contexts. It is largely viewed as an output, with similar approaches implemented as in previous strategic plans, and more focus on policy development than on policy implementation. In addition, technical capacity and financial resources towards normative work are limited.
- Incorporating the effects of megatrends are mostly addressed through evidence gathering and analysis. Megatrends have a lower level of operationalization than other shifts, with difficulty moving from analysis to implementation, and a more reactive than systematic implementation approach. Some megatrends are experiencing more traction than others e.g. population dynamics, food security and digitalization, with many programs in the region addressing these. There are also other megatrends that are becoming increasingly critical in the region, such as urbanization, climate change, conflict and other humanitarian crises.
- There is also inadequate elaboration of the HDP nexus approach or any clear evidence of its implementation.

11. The enablers explored through the RPE: Strategic Communication, Human Resource Strategies, and Knowledge Management (KM) have not been adequately utilized, with lower utilization levels linked to human resource capacity gaps.

- There are several project or unit-driven KM initiatives and good practices at the regional and country level, and inadequate central coordination of these initiatives, as well as a lack of Standard Operating Procedures. This has resulted in some parallel systems, bottlenecks in knowledge transfer, and inefficiencies across some organizational processes.
- There is a capacity gap in strategic communication, noted by the absence of a communications specialist in the region in the past year, a dated communications strategy developed in 2019, and the use of focal points in country offices that have limited specialist skills, and play dual roles in the organization, reducing their effectiveness. The result of the capacity gap in strategic communication is lower visibility of UNFPA’s impact among external stakeholders especially donors and some country Governments.
- The main human resource management strategy deployed towards acceleration was the realignment at WCARO, necessitated by a misalignment in the complement of human

Fig 3. Importance of enablers by shift/accelerator (% of countries)



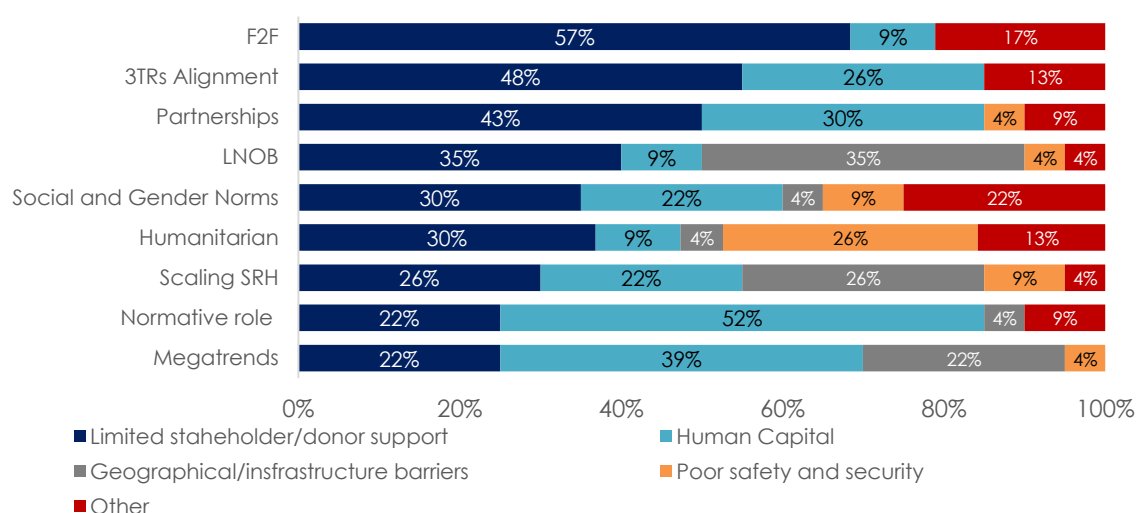
resources (skill sets and expertise levels) and the requirements of the new Regional Program.

The realignment has resulted in the curation of a highly skilled team of staff, organized with a new organigram that creates linkages across units, thereby preventing the previous siloed ways of working. The recently recruited experts for strategic communication and knowledge management have also initiated processes to improve the utilization of these enablers. Figure 3 below shows country perspectives on the importance of enablers for each of the strategic shifts/accelerators.

12. The main barriers explored through the RPE: Limited Stakeholder/Donor Commitment, Inadequate Human Capital, Geographical Barriers, Poor Safety and Security, as well as Operational Inefficiencies, have all affected the operationalization of accelerators/shifts.

- Limited stakeholder commitment and donor support impact acceleration in the region, in addition to several contextual challenges that have resulted in further decline. These range from donor fatigue/mistrust, to competing crises, politicized funding, MICs deprioritized for donor funding, and internal private sector donor restrictions.
- In terms of inadequate human capital, personnel gaps persist at the country level, with many specialized roles managed by non-specialized focal points and language barriers hindering communication between regional and country teams.
- Increasing insecurity in the region is impacting program implementation, and safety and security teams’ capacity and resources in the region are insufficient.
- Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure increase the cost of implementation, with service delivery adaptations deployed to reach cut-off populations with services.
- Lastly, operational inefficiencies, accountability issues, and spending capacity affect budget execution and make it difficult to achieve results to attract more funding. Figure 4

Fig 4. Barriers affecting shifts/accelerators (% of countries)



below shows country perspectives on the barriers for each of the strategic shifts/accelerators.

13. In terms of a forward-looking perspective, the likelihood of achieving the 3TRs in the current Regional Program period is improbable. The outstanding work (unfinished business for the next SP period) in this region surpasses the expectation of only dealing with unfinished business, there is significant work still remaining. The focus for the next Regional Program should still be the 3TRs. Also, with UNFPA’s current role in service delivery yielding lower impact due to declining funding levels and increasing humanitarian crises and insecurity in the region, there is an urgent need to examine UNFPA’s positioning and role. The current

landscape presents an opportunity for UNFPA to play a stronger normative role, with policy advocacy work becoming even more relevant, as well as leveraging other UN agencies with stronger operational capacity, through joint programming and advocacy to maximize impact. Also, for the current service delivery portfolio, improvements in program design, intervention selection to suit diverse country context, quality of implementation, and evidence generation are needed to further accelerate progress. Further, programs addressing the 3TRs, are increasingly being implemented in the humanitarian context, requiring further investments in humanitarian capacity, strengthening the HDP nexus, and contextualizing programming. In addition, there is a need to scale up complementary economic empowerment programming through partnerships, towards alleviating poverty, increasing women and youth participation, and contributing to sustainable development, as this is a major underlying factor affecting the 3TRs. Lastly, WCARO is facing significant readiness challenges especially linked to human resource gaps, both in terms of skills and personnel numbers, as well as operational inefficiencies. The realignment is already addressing this, but several gaps remain. Furthermore, gaps in positioning as a feminist organization suggest that the organization has yet to fully align its structure and capacity with its normative goals. There are also areas where the regional office can provide increased support, especially the four nascent accelerators/strategic shifts.

Conclusions

14. The RPE concludes that:

- The introduction of accelerators and strategic shifts in the 2022-2025 Regional Program /CPDs is very relevant in the WCA region, and **accelerators/strategic shifts have largely been defined and contextualized, with operationalization well underway**. However, the levels of operationalization vary by accelerator and some require clearer organizational guidance.
- UNFPA's current role in service delivery is yielding lower impact due to declining funding levels and increasing insecurity in the region. Gaps in donor commitment and stakeholder support suggest an urgent need to examine UNFPA's positioning and role. **The current political, economic and humanitarian landscape presents an opportunity for UNFPA to play a stronger normative role**, with policy advocacy work becoming even more relevant, as well as leveraging other UN agencies with stronger operational capacity, through joint programming and advocacy to maximize impact.
- **The core barrier to implementation in the region can be summed up in one word "capacity."** This entails both the quantity and quality of human resource, and to some extent the systems in place for program delivery. All accelerators, enablers and barriers examined, and their utilization or impact largely reflect capacity gaps. The recent HR realignment of the in the region has begun to address this gap, alongside several capacity building activities and expected systems improvements led by the new specialists.
- **Optimizing several accelerators and strategic shifts requires improved analysis and utilization of evidence.** This ranges from better integrating population and data activities to the 3TRs, to a need for stronger analysis on intersectionality to strengthen the LNOB agenda, filling gaps in evidence on the linkages across megatrends, financing, and strategic communication, amongst others.
- **The primary considerations for conceptualizing the next Regional Program, should include the state of progress towards the 3TRs in the region, the opportunity to optimize the accelerators with increasing capacity in the region, as well as responding to recent contextual changes.** In this region, the unfinished business envisaged for the next strategic plan is significant.

Recommendations

15. The RPE makes the following recommendations:

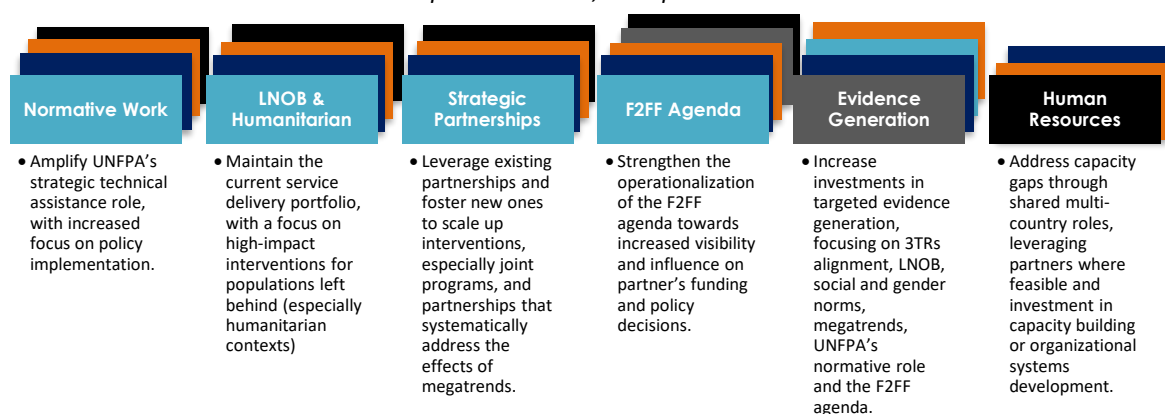
- **Amplify UNFPA’s normative role**, in a bid to better navigate the rapidly evolving socio-political context in the region, with increased focus on policy implementation.
- **Maintain the current service delivery portfolio, with a focus on high-impact interventions for populations left behind** (especially humanitarian contexts), towards optimizing constrained resources, and responding to contextual changes in the region.
- **Leverage existing partnerships and foster new ones to scale up interventions**, especially joint programs, and partnerships that systematically address the effects of megatrends.
- **Strengthen the operationalization of the F2FF agenda**, with a focus on further dissemination of guidance, fostering ownership at regional and country levels, and redefining engagement norms with donor and IFI partners towards increased visibility and influence on partner’s funding and policy decisions.
- **Increase investments in targeted evidence generation**, focusing on 3TRs alignment, LNOB, social and gender norms, megatrends, UNFPA’s normative role and the F2FF agenda.
- **In order to address the wide capacity gaps, HR realignment processes should, consider hiring additional personnel for highly specialized and critical roles; potentially shared multi-country roles due to resource constraints** (for Humanitarian, F2FF, Communications, KM, Safety and Security). **Leveraging partnerships where feasible** (for Social Norms). **Further investment in capacity building** (for Policy Advocacy, and Value Clarification) as well as organizational systems development for other areas. *Fig 5* below illustrates the links between the conclusions and recommendations.

Fig 5. Linking Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions



Recommendations are linked to multiple conclusions, as depicted with the stacked cards below :

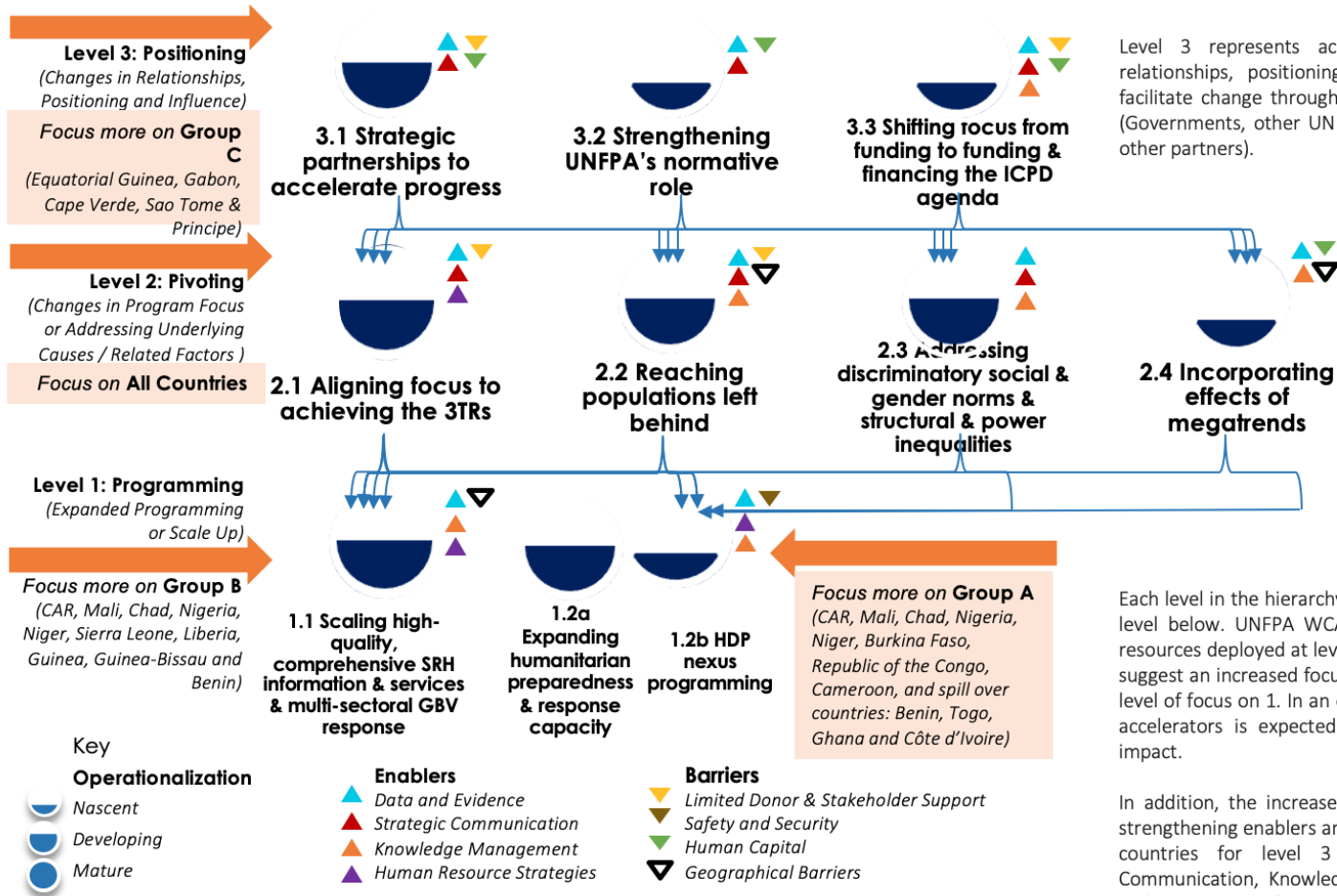


The graphic below further expatiates the recommendations towards optimizing strategic shifts.



Fig 6. Accelerators: hierarchy, operationalization, enablers and barriers

This graphic depicts a hierarchy among accelerators/strategic shifts assessed in the RPE, their levels of operationalization, as well as enablers and barriers



Level 3 represents accelerators/shifts that aim to evolve UNFPA's relationships, positioning and influence. These are catalytic and will facilitate change through influencing programming and funding of others (Governments, other UN agencies, IFIs, Coalitions of CSOs and NGOs and other partners).

Level 2 represents accelerators/shifts that aim to change UNFPA's program's focus or address underlying factors. These enable better focus and/or optimize delivery of level 1 accelerators/shifts by targeting resources (2.1, 2.2), or addressing obstacles through UNFPA or its partner's complementary initiatives (2.3, 2.4).

Level 1 represents accelerators/shifts related to expanded programming through scaling up high quality services and the capacity to deliver them effectively. These have a direct effect on the three transformative results through service delivery in development and humanitarian settings.

Each level in the hierarchy is theorized to accelerate all the elements in the level below. UNFPA WCARO currently operates at all levels, with more resources deployed at level 1 and 2 than level 3. The RPE recommendations suggest an increased focus at levels 3 and 2, whilst maintaining the current level of focus on 1. In an era with constrained resources, prioritizing level 3 accelerators is expected to require less resources and achieve macro-impact.

In addition, the increased focus on level 3 may also prompt prioritizing strengthening enablers and addressing barriers that were reported by most countries for level 3 accelerators: Data and Evidence, Strategic Communication, Knowledge Management, Donor & Stakeholder Support and Human Capital.

Summary of Achievements on Strategic Shifts

Aligning focus on achieving the 3TRs

UNFPA WCA's planning and programming is now fully aligned to the 3TRs, with new capacity and partnerships to incorporate and implement this accelerator largely in place.

Reaching populations left behind

The LNOB accelerator has been operationalized with systematic and coherent planning, utilization of specialised implementing partners, specialized interventions/delivery models, and targeted policy advocacy efforts to create an enabling environment to reach populations left behind. Examples of these include:

- The Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project utilizing incentive programs to train and retain healthcare professionals in underserved communities, as well as experimenting with the use of drones to deliver products, particularly during the rainy season when traditional routes may be inaccessible;
- Scaling up humanitarian response in Mali with a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM);
- A project delivering mental health services in humanitarian areas in Burkina Faso;
- A program focusing on Kayayei (head porters in markets, who are mostly first-time young mothers, pregnant girls, survivors of GBV and PSEA) in Ghana;
- Using commercial motorcycle riders to reach the last mile in Liberia;
- Digital supply chain innovations in Sao Tome and Principe;
- Addressing the repeal of the FGM act in the Gambia ; and the
- Popularization of the Mouebarara law in Congo to combat violence against women and girls.

Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities

This is being implemented in an integrated manner, with a holistic multi-sectoral service delivery approach being rolled out at regional and county office levels, and capacity building provided for effective integration. A variety of programs already tackling this strategic shift e.g.:

- Large regional programs such as the Spotlight initiative, SWEDD, joint UN programs on Child Marriage and FGM, and several country programs which include advocacy to influence legal frameworks, institutional capacity building for key government departments, engaging community social structures (especially traditional and religious leaders), husband schools (positive masculinity), supporting the scale up of one-stop centres, and empowering and building coalitions of women and youth groups/CSOs;
- The multifaceted approach to address adolescent pregnancy and child marriage, emphasizing education, SRH services, and empowerment in Sierra Leone;
- The holistic prevention, protection, care and socio-economic re-integration interventions for women, adolescents and young people in Senegal; and
- The women empowerment project in the Gambia that comprises economic empowerment, political participation, movement building and allyship programs with male champions.

Incorporating the effects of megatrends

This is mostly addressed through evidence gathering and analysis, but less through implementation. Progress has been made with population dynamics (a traditional focus area), there are also increasing digitalization projects. Other programs addressing food insecurity,

climate change, and conflict exist, but are not implemented proactively as an attempt to integrate the effects of megatrends. Examples of programs tackling this strategic shift are :

- The SWEDD project collectively addresses women’s empowerment and the demographic dividend, depoliticizing issues around SRH. This program model should be replicated.
- The Transhumance project in Guinea-Bissau designed to tackle climate change and related inequalities;
- The Luxembourg-funded climate change and HDP-nexus project in Burkina Faso; as well as
- The launch of the Youth Action group on Climate change in Ghana, in partnership with the National Youth Authority.

Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming

WCARO plays a unique role as humanitarian GBV response leader, with increasing coordination efforts, development of a road map, establishment of a steering committee, and facilitating SRH/GBV response activities and preparedness planning. Humanitarian capacity is growing in the region, with increasing country coverage through decentralization of teams and expert pools. There is inadequate elaboration of the nexus approach. The scope of the humanitarian response includes:

- Mali, CAR, Burkina Faso, Congo, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, and Mauritania having a sizeable portfolio of humanitarian response activities, mostly comprising SRH and GBV response in emergency settings, serving both IDPs and host communities;
- Countries are responding to crises such as floods, conflicts, epidemics, forced population displacements, serving refugees, returnees, IDPs and host populations affected by crises, especially vulnerable groups like children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities;
- Some countries are dealing with the spill over of asylum seekers/ refugees e.g. Cote d’Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Mauritania and Togo.

Partnerships accelerating progress

WCARO works with an extensive network of implementation partners, has effective collaboration with other regions through South-South and Triangular Cooperation frameworks, strong relationships with other related UN agencies through joint programs, and are making deliberate efforts to strengthen capacity to foster effective partnerships. There are also several successful implementation partnerships, including:

- MUSKOKA project implemented in partnership with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and WHO;
- The recent partnership with Tostan, working on addressing discriminatory social and gender norms;
- The relationship with WAHO focused on scaling up FP services and sustaining commodity security in the region;
- There are also sustained relationships with Government, CSO and NGO partners at country level, and countries are also expanding their partnership base, with increasing engagements with international financial institutions, and private sector organizations (although efforts here are still limited).

Scaling up high-quality, comprehensive SRH & a multi-sectoral GBV response

WCARO is scaling up these services through systems strengthening endeavours, including strategy and guidelines development, service quality improvement, health worker training,

and the integration of key strategies /innovations into broader health systems. Examples include:

- Development of guidelines, policies, SOPs, and training of healthcare workers; Implementation of maternal death surveillance and response in Sierra Leone.
- Strengthening the national health system to provide high quality integrated SRH and FP services as part of the national Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) strategy in Sierra Leone.
- Inclusion of program interventions into the government's social safety net program in Cote d'Ivoire.
- Capacity-building for the national health system (staff training, equipping health centres, providing drugs and reagents, etc.) in Niger.
- Diversifying the skills of midwives by strengthening their capacity to deliver post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for GBV survivors in addition to other FP and MNH services) in Mali.
- Strengthening midwifery education through curriculum development, regulatory support, association building, advocacy, capacity building, and mentorship programs across the region.

Strengthening UNFPA's normative role

This is being implemented through leading coordination groups and strong relationships with key government ministries and departments towards influencing national policies and programs. There is a need to further strengthen policy implementation post-policy development, and increased support to COs from the regional office. Examples include:

- Sierra Leone influencing policies, relevant laws, and accountability frameworks, with effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these policies (e.g. a National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy, Male Involvement Strategy for GBV prevention).
- Cote d'Ivoire has an active advocacy and policy work, but notes limitations in translating policy change to implementation;
- Nigeria is implementing policy development support as part of UNFPA's normative role, but notes inadequate funding to support policy implementation post advocacy.

Shifting focus from funding to funding and financing the ICPD agenda in the region

The F2FF approach at UNFPA WCARO is still being finetuned, with new activities gradually being rolled out. There are also a number of regional and country-level results. See details of a few examples below:

- Signing of the COMPACT agreements in the past year, with a sizeable number of countries in the region achieving their minimum contribution requirement for FP supplies, and budget lines created for the procurement of RH commodities. Beyond fulfilling the financial targets, the intent of COMPACT is to build national capacity and systems towards sustainability.
- Advocating for Senegal's integration into the SWEDD project (structured around transformative results) in 2022 through a World Bank credit to the State of Senegal.
- The creation of a budget line for the surgical treatment of obstetric fistulas in Senegal.
- The incorporation of FP in the National Health Insurance Scheme in Ghana.
- National dialogues on domestic financing for FP and GBV services, along with increased allocations for the Domestic Violence Secretariat and local government shelters for GBV victims in Ghana.

1. Introduction

16. This chapter introduces the evaluation, including its rationale, purpose, objectives, and scope. It also provides a brief overview of the evaluation process.

1.1 Background

17. As part of the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Strategic Plan Formative Evaluation 2022-2025, an independent evaluation team, in collaboration with the West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) has conducted this **Formative Evaluation of the West and Central Africa (WCA) Regional Program 2022-2025**, referred to as the Regional Program Evaluation (RPE) hereafter. This evaluation sought to complement ongoing evaluations in the other five UNFPA Regional Offices, the internal Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNFPA Strategic Plan (SP) 2022-2025, and the global Strategic Plan Evaluation (SPE). The evaluation covered the current Regional Plan period starting in 2022 until the end of data collection in mid-year 2024. It also covered all 23 countries comprising the WCA region through a region-wide survey, complemented with country-level studies in two countries and a deep dive on two critical topics.

18. The Global and Regional Programs of UNFPA are essential components of its strategic plans, aiming to complement country-level efforts in promoting the implementation of the Program of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These programs engage in inter-governmental processes to facilitate the implementation of global and regional commitments through data-informed policy dialogue and advocacy. Through collaboration with partners, they provide technical support, capacity building and regional initiatives to help countries achieve their national priorities. Additionally, these programs play a crucial role in guiding advocacy, fostering partnerships, mobilizing resources, and facilitating knowledge exchange and innovation scaling.²

19. The UNFPA Evaluation Office and the WCARO initiated the formative evaluation of the WCA Region to (a) show accountability to stakeholders, (b) strengthen evidence-based decision-making, and (c) share valuable insights to accelerate progress in achieving the identified goals. This evaluation was planned as part of the UNFPA quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan. By providing evidence on the WCA region and country contexts, it will additionally serve to stimulate discussions concerning the formulation of the forthcoming Regional Program 2026-2029, taking into account the prevailing state of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and three pivotal Transformative Results (3TRs); (i) ending the unmet need for Family Planning (FP)- TR1, (ii) ending preventable maternal deaths-TR2, and (iii) ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Practices (HP)-TR3.³

1.2 Purpose, Objective and Scope

20. The purpose of this formative evaluation is to provide evidence to support UNFPA WCARO's learning related to what works (and what does not) to accelerate progress towards achievement of the 3TRs, informing the remaining period of the current Regional Plan (2022-2025) and informing the design of the next Strategic Plan and Regional Program (2026-2029) and its stated

² RPE Terms of Reference

³ RPE Terms of Reference

intent to focus on “unfinished business”.

21. This RPE is a milestone within the SP “evaluative evidence package” to inform the three strategic plans (2018-2021; 2022-2025; 2026-2030), which are intended to build a foundation, and accelerate progress towards achieving the 3TRs.

22. The objective of this evaluation is to assess UNFPA WCARO’s **organizational readiness and strategic positioning to accelerate progress** towards the achievement of the 3TRs and catalyse a discussion on the design of the next Strategic Plan and Regional Program for WCA given the state of progress on the SDGs. New elements introduced in this Strategic Plan are the focus – namely, the **accelerators for change and the strategic shifts**.

23. This evaluation is primarily intended for UNFPA internal structures, primarily senior management and technical staff at the regional office, as well as country offices in the region, headquarters, and the Executive Board. Partners and stakeholders of UNFPA will also benefit from this exercise. UNFPA WCARO partners with **international organizations** like UNICEF, **regional bodies** such as ECOWAS and the African Union, as well as **national governments and organizations**. These partnerships focus on maternal health, family planning, HIV prevention, gender equality, and youth empowerment across the region.

1.3 The Evaluation Questions

24. The analytical framework for this RPE was based on the SPE analytical framework and the lines of inquiry derived from questions in the RPE Terms of Reference (ToR), SPE inception report and other RPEs as relevant to the WCA context. It was also based on document reviews and consultations undertaken during the inception phase. The framework focused on gaining a better understanding of the strategic shifts and accelerators, including their relevance, operationalization, and use to enhance programming (Evaluation Question 1), as well as relevant enablers (EQ2), barriers (EQ3), and the implications of these on future planning and programming (EQ4) within the context of a formative evaluation.⁴

25. The formative evaluation is focused on learning, with an open, reflective, and adaptive mindset, understanding what works and what does not and why, with respect to the optimization of UNFPA’s resources and relationships, as well as identifying relevant and effective strategy adaptations, to achieve its goals. **Note that performance measurements related to enhanced programming are out of scope for this evaluation.** Like the SPE, the RPE assumed that incorporating strategic shifts or accelerators is enhanced programming that will strengthen UNFPA’s contribution to the 3TRs. The paragraphs below present the evaluation questions and focus areas by strategic shift category (**Accelerators, Amplifications and Adjustments**).⁵ See [Annex 6](#) for the full evaluation matrix.

⁴ The RPE prioritized 9 strategic shifts and/or accelerators, as defined in the RPE ToR, and these have been confirmed in consultation with the WCARO to be the most relevant and in scope for this RPE. See EQ1 in Table 1.

⁵ Strategic shift categories are clarified in Section 2.3

EQ1. Strategic Shifts⁶ and Accelerators Operationalization:

26. To what extent have the strategic shifts and accelerators been relevant, clearly defined and operationalized in the Regional Program, and supported the achievement of 3TRs and ICPD PoA priorities at regional and country levels? Strategic shifts in focus include:

Table 1: EQ1 Focus Areas

Strategic Shift	Category
1.1 Aligning focus on achieving the 3TRs.	Accelerator
1.2 Reaching populations left behind” and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first.” (Leaving No One Behind - LNOB)	Accelerator
1.3 Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities.	Accelerator
1.4 Incorporating effects of megatrends, particularly population dynamics, urbanization, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, climate change, security, digitalization, etc.	Amplification Accelerator*
1.5 Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming in the region.	Amplification Accelerator*
1.6 Partnerships accelerating progress on 3TRs and ICPD PoA in the region.	Adjustment Accelerator*
1.7 Scaling up the provision of high-quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services and multi-sectoral response to GBV in the region.	Amplification
1.8 Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role.	Amplification
1.9 Shifting focus from funding, to funding and financing the ICPD agenda in the region.	Adjustment

**Strategic shifts that are also listed as accelerators in the SP, but are better defined as adjustments or amplifications per the SPE conceptual framework.*

EQ2. Enablers

27. What are the enablers to operationalizing the shifts, and to what extent have they facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program?⁷ Enablers in focus here include:

Table 2: EQ2 Focus Areas

Enablers
2.1 Extent that strategic communication has facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts
2.2 Extent that human resource strategies and management has facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts
2.3 Extent that Knowledge Management (KM) has facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts

⁶ Of the 12 strategic shifts in the 2022-2025 strategic plan, there are 4 that fully overlap with the accelerators, 1 that partially overlaps and 1 that does not (see Fig 1, Section 2 above). 8 strategic shifts are in focus under this question, including the 5 that overlap (fully/partially) with accelerators, and 3 other strategic shifts.

⁷ 2 specific enablers are in focus in this question, in addition to other enablers that will emerge from the evaluation.

2.4 Other enablers to strengthen implementation of strategic shifts and accelerators

**Enablers were culled from the SPE inception report. The RPE however expects to uncover additional barriers specific to the region, thus Focus Area 2.4*

EQ3. Barriers

28. What are the inhibiting factors, and to what extent have they limited acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program ? Barriers in focus here include:

Table 3: EQ3 Focus Areas

Barriers*	
3.1	Extent that inadequate human capital hindered the operationalization of accelerators and shifts in the region
3.2	Extent that geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure hindered the operationalization of accelerators and shifts in the region
3.3	Extent that poor safety and security in the region hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region
3.4	Extent that limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support hindered the operationalization of accelerators and shifts in the region
3.5	Other hindering factors that have affected the utilization of the strategic shifts and accelerators in the region

**Barriers were developed using threats to acceleration identified for WCARO in the MTR survey.*

EQ4. Forward Looking Perspective

29. To what extent should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program to stay relevant, and increase its impact, given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region, as well as internal and external challenges and opportunities.

Table 4: EQ4 Focus Areas

Forward Looking Perspective	
4.1	Extent that UNFPA should reconceptualize the next Regional Program given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region?
4.2	Organizational readiness to face future challenges and changes, and fulfil its normative role.

1.4 Overview of the Evaluation Process

30. The evaluation process consisted of five phases: preparatory (October 2023 to January 2024), inception (March to April 2024), data collection (April to May 2024), analysis and reporting (~June to September 2024), and dissemination (~October 2024 to February 2025).

2. Background and Context

31. This chapter provides the context; including the broader WCA development context, the status of the 3TRs, an overview of the UNFPA SP and Regional Program (2022-2025) as well as of progress reported through an internal Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This chapter also defines and distinguishes accelerators and strategic shifts. Overall, it sets the background for understanding the methodology and approach of the evaluation.

2.1 WCA Context

32. The 2022-2025 WCA Regional Program is being implemented within an external context characterized by several factors, including the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, political instability accompanied by armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, an increase in events related to climate and environmental change, a global rise in conservative values and a shift in donor priorities. Also noting the significant diversity among the 23 countries in the region, including: 11 Low Income Countries⁸ (LIC); 10 Lower middle-income countries⁹ (LMIC); and 2 Upper Middle-Income Countries¹⁰ (UMIC); which are also classified as 1 Hispanophone, 3 Lusophone, 5 Anglophone, and 14 Francophone countries.

33. Characterised as the region with the **highest population growth globally**,¹¹ and the youngest region in the world, the population of West and Central Africa is growing at a 2.6% annual rate, except for Cabo Verde. Despite a decline in fertility rates from 6.3 to 4.8 children per woman since 1994, the region remains significantly higher than the global average of 2.3 children per woman.¹² However, critical investments in human capital and access to decent employment are required to enable the region to benefit from the demographic dividend.

34. Currently, the **macroeconomic volatility** in many parts of the African region (characterized by slow or negative economic growth, high inflation, weak jobs markets, debt distress) further constricts access to fundamental resources.¹³ As such, insecurity affects more than 75 million people, and almost half of the countries in West and Central Africa (11 of 23 countries) are projected to have a more than 100 per cent increase in the number of people in **food crisis**.^{14,15} Given the relationship between food security, positive health outcomes, and women's empowerment it is imperative to address food insecurity to achieve UNFPA's transformative goals. Indeed, food insecurity exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, particularly among marginalized populations, including child marriage and GBV.^{16 17}

⁸ Note: Liberia, Togo, Guinea-Bissau, CAR, Guinea, Chad, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone

⁹ Note: Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Ghana, Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, Cameroon, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Nigeria

¹⁰ Note: Gabon, Guinea Equatorial

¹¹ International Fund for Agricultural Development. Undated. [West and Central Africa](http://www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/regions/wca). Webpage available at: www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/regions/wca

¹² AP1_StrategicForesight_v3

¹³ Matthew Cummins. UNICEF ESARO. Macroeconomic Volatility in Eastern and Southern Africa: Protecting Children from Rising Risks. January 2023.

¹⁴ UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2023. [West and Central Africa | Situation Reports](https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/west-central-africa/). Webpage available at: <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/west-central-africa/>. Acceleration Paper 1.

¹⁵ AP8_Humanitarian Acceleration_v4

¹⁶ Gambir, K., Matsika, A.B., Panagiotou, A. et al. Associations between child marriage and food insecurity in Zimbabwe: a participatory mixed methods study. *BMC Public Health* 24, 13 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17408-7>

¹⁷ Agrawal P, Post LA, Glover J, Hersey D, Oberoi P, Biroscak B (2023) The interrelationship between food security, climate change, and gender-based violence: A scoping review with system dynamics modeling. *PLOS Glob Public Health* 3(2): e0000300. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0000300>

35. **In addition, there is growing political instability in the region**, with six countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, and Niger) currently under military rule, and unclear plans for the return to civilian governance. The recent withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) may exacerbate economic uncertainty and inflation in the Central Sahel region. This political instability is closely related to the increase in humanitarian needs in the region. Currently, eight countries in the region are experiencing a **humanitarian crisis** or are prone to humanitarian crisis: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic (CAR), Congo, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.¹⁸ As such, over 1.76 million people have been internally displaced (for the 2nd or 3rd time). The crisis in Sahel is also resulting in a spill over to coastal countries such as Benin, Togo, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, that are now facing the humanitarian consequences, including population displacement, and overburdened basic services, in parallel with pre-existing public health emergencies and climate-related disasters as floods.¹⁹

36. There has been an increase in events related to **climate and environmental change**. In 2022, flooding affected more than 5.8 million individuals across 20 countries in the region.²⁰ The increasing average temperatures have led to heatwaves and extreme weather events over time. Coastal regions in West and Central Africa are especially at risk from rising sea levels, endangering both residents and critical infrastructure, and resulting in erosion, and land and property loss.²¹

37. The recent **COVID-19 crisis** worsened WCA countries' fragile conditions, affecting all aspects of life. Governments implemented unprecedented measures, straining public health systems. Women and girls, overrepresented in healthcare, faced increased exposure to the disease and heightened vulnerability to violence. Economic disruptions led to delays in crucial activities like census rounds, and over 19 million people faced **food insecurity** during the lean season from June to August 2020.²²

38. There has also been a **global rise in conservative values and a pushback on gender equality**. Conservatism is reinforcing harmful gender norms, fostering punitive laws or triggering the repeal of laws protecting women and girls (e.g. the recent attempt to repeal the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) law in The Gambia), stigma, discrimination, and violence against vulnerable groups like those living with HIV, key populations, and LGBTQI+ individuals, while also limiting space for progressive civil society.²³ Therefore, it is crucial to preserve the progress achieved and ensure that we do not experience any setbacks.

39. Finally, there has also been a **shift in donor priorities accelerated by the Covid19 pandemic**. Donor attention is moving away from sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) towards addressing global challenges such as climate change and migration.²⁴ This contributes to massive and widening funding gaps for basic social services, which are critical

¹⁸ AP2_Zero preventable maternal death_v4

¹⁹ UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (2024) Response in coastal countries linked to central Sahel crisis spillover

²⁰ AP1_StrategicForesight_v3

²¹ [Rising Sea Levels Besieging Africa's Booming Coastal Cities](https://www.africacenter.org/publications/2022/01/10/rising-sea-levels-besieging-africa-s-booming-coastal-cities/) (africacenter.org)

²² UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, Annex 4: Global and regional Programs, 7. West and Central Africa regional Program

²³ Final_EECARO RPE Inception Note with Annexes 21.2.24

²⁴ PMNCH. Discussion Note for the PMNCH Board: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. 4-5 July 2024.

https://pmnch.who.int/docs/librariesprovider9/governance/2024070405-srhr-discussion-paper.pdf?sfvrsn=cccdfa41_1

for the implementation of the 3TRs. The increasing politicization of aid and volatile conditions in WCA are reducing donor willingness to invest in the region, while a shift towards large-scale humanitarian crises often overshadows protracted crises affecting many countries in WCA.^{25 26}

2.2 The Status of UNFPA's Transformative Results in West and Central Africa

40. The Evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018 to 2021 in WCA, highlighted advancements despite facing challenges such as rising humanitarian needs, geopolitical instability, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside persistently high maternal mortality ratios. The WCARO outlined progress towards achieving the 3TRs in its report titled "Strengthening Resilience for Sexual and Reproductive Health in West and Central Africa" for the 2018–2021 program cycle. Key outcomes included increased contraceptive use, reduced adolescent birth rates, and declines in rates of child marriage and FGM.

41. While progress has been made over the past decade, achieving the 2030 targets requires further efforts in WCA.^{27 28 29} The region still faces challenges in reducing unmet needs for FP, with rates varying from 16% in Cabo Verde to 32% in Liberia and Mauritania. On average, around one in five women in the region are not using contraception despite wanting to avoid pregnancy (TR1). Although maternal mortality rates have decreased, the trend still falls short of attaining SDG targets by 2030. Disparities persist between countries and within specific population segments, leaving some underserved (TR2). Additionally, progress in reducing GBV and harmful practices has also been slow due to pervasive gender inequalities, with seven countries in the region ranking lowest on the Gender Inequality Index. (TR3)

42. To focus on the most impactful pathways and provide tailored support to countries, the UNFPA strategic plan for 2022-2025 introduced the concept of tiers to replace the colour quadrants used in previous plans. These tiers indicate the progress of program countries toward achieving transformative results and also serve as a basis for allocating core resources to UNFPA country offices.

- Tier 1 signifies that none of the transformative results have been achieved.
- Tier 2 indicates that one of the three transformative results has been achieved, and
- Tier 3 denotes that two or more of the three transformative results have been achieved.

As of today, all WCA countries are Tier 1 countries, except for Cabo Verde (Tier 3). This means that none of the transformative results have been achieved yet in most of the region. However, notable shifts were observed primarily at the national level throughout 2023, contributing to the acceleration of the 3TRs, and were outlined in the main narrative of the Executive Director's annual report.³⁰

43. TR 1: Ending unmet need for FP (and SRHR)

²⁵ [Humanitarian finance donors and recipients | GHA Report 2021 - Development Initiatives \(devinit.org\)](#)

²⁶ [The New Humanitarian | Trends driving humanitarian crises in 2023 \(and what to do about them\)](#)

²⁷ AP3_Zero unmet need FP_v4

²⁸ AP2_Zero preventable maternal death_v4

²⁹ AP4_Zero GBV harmful practices_v5

³⁰ WCA_Inputs template - 2023 ED annual report to the EB

- Multiple countries, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, and Guinea, have witnessed an increase in modern contraceptive prevalence rates.
- Several countries, such as the CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, and Nigeria, have demonstrated increased government commitment to FP programs through budget allocations and policy reforms.
- UNFPA's advocacy efforts have resulted in positive outcomes in several countries, such as Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Nigeria. These efforts have led to increased government contributions, the development of strategic plans, and improved access to reproductive health services. Ongoing efforts to expand access to SRH services in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

44. **TR 2: Ending preventable maternal deaths**

- Countries like Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire have made significant strides in reducing maternal mortality ratios and increasing skilled attendance at births.
- In countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Cameroon, there are notable endeavours to strengthen the expertise and capabilities of healthcare practitioners, specifically midwives. Collaborations with international entities and financial assistance are enabling the education and placement of midwives in regions with limited access to healthcare services.

45. **TR 3: Ending GBV and harmful practices**

- CAR, Gambia, and Sao Tome and Principe are increasing funding and establishing specialized services to combat GBV.
- Benin, Cabo Verde, and Sierra Leone engaged youth through forums, campaigns, and policy support, addressing their reproductive health and gender equality needs.
- Sierra Leone and Benin enhanced laws and policies for gender equality, showing commitment to advancing reproductive rights and gender equality.

2.3 UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025

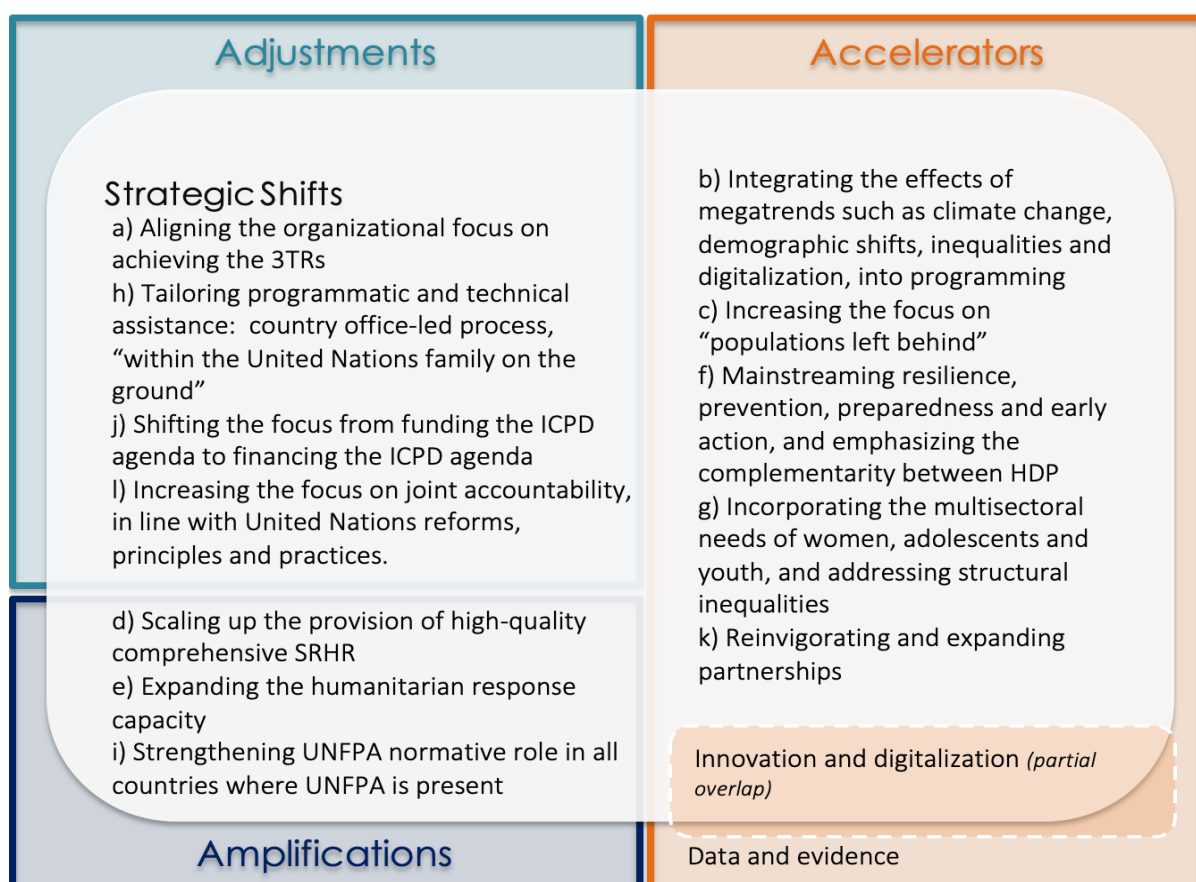
46. The second strategic plan in the series of three plans targeted to achieve the SDGs, served as an urgent call to accelerate progress and transform operational approaches to achieve the 3TRs. It aims to introduce significant changes to fulfilling UNFPA's mission of serving the world's most marginalized individuals, particularly women, adolescents, and youth. Its primary objective is to ensure inclusion (leaving no one behind), and advocate for the protection and promotion of human rights for all, especially for marginalized groups.

47. Furthermore, acknowledging the necessity for internal transformation, the plan outlined UNFPA's vision for spearheading efforts toward gender equality, equity, and non-discrimination, as well as the empowerment of women and girls, alongside the realization of sexual and reproductive health rights. To realize these objectives, the UNFPA strategic plan for 2022-2025 furnishes a comprehensive framework ensuring that all fundamental organizational processes (including policies, programs, technical support, human resources, Resource Mobilization (RM), partnerships, and communications) are fully aligned with UNFPA's mission.

48. In pursuit of enhanced organizational effectiveness, the plan aims to cultivate refined programming for achieving results, optimize resource management, and foster expanded partnerships to maximize impact. The diagram below provides a visual representation of the strategic plan elements, illustrating the interconnectedness between the goal, outcomes, outputs, and accelerators.

49. The six accelerators for change (*See Fig 7*) are a new introduction to UNFPA’s Strategic Plan, they are designed to drive advancements towards UNFPA's objectives and extend beyond the principles outlined in previous strategic plans. The plan demonstrates how each accelerator can be implemented through specific program strategies to realize the plan's outputs.³¹ In addition to these accelerators, the strategic plan lists a set of 12 strategic shifts. These shifts demonstrate UNFPA's commitment to embracing innovative approaches to support the implementation of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.³²

Fig 7. Strategic Shifts Categories & Accelerators Overlap



50. Further, in conformity with the SPE and other regional evaluation plans, the WCA RPE team recognized the overlap between the strategic shifts and accelerators. Of the 12 strategic shifts in the 2022-2025 strategic plan, there are 4 that fully overlap with the accelerators, 1 that partially overlaps and 1 that does not. The SPE Inception Report further outlined how the strategic shifts, which encompass various types of actions intersect with the six accelerators, thereby categorizing the shifts into:

³¹ Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Inception Report

³² Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Inception Report

- (i) those that also serve as accelerators (partially b, c, f, g, k);
- (ii) adjustments identified as crucial strategic shifts (shifts a, h, j, l); and
- (iii) amplifications where UNFPA is tasked with increasing efforts in areas it is already engaged in at the program level (shifts d, e, i). *See Fig 7* above.

51. Lastly, the ToR for this evaluation also outlined two key "enablers" - strategic communication and human resource management - essential for implementing the strategic shifts and accelerators. In line with the SPE Inception Report, the evaluation team recognized "knowledge management" as an additional enabler, and also incorporated this in the areas of inquiry.

2.4. UNFPA WCA Regional Program 2022-2025

52. The WCA regional program for 2022-2025 was endorsed by the UNFPA Executive Board during its second regular session in 2021, serving as an essential component of the UNFPA strategic plan for 2022-2025.

53. The regional program financial envelope (indicative resource needs) is \$64.7 million. Of this, \$44.9 million (69.4%) are non-core resources to be mobilized from other resources in order to achieve the Program objectives.³³ It is notable that UNFPA WCA raised \$92.59 million in 2023, surpassing its target of \$80 million by 16%.³⁴ Despite challenges, this is the highest amount raised since 2021. Additionally, more governments showed support for UNFPA's core budget, with 10 pledging compared to 4 in 2022 and 7 countries contributing to UNFPA's core resources.³⁵ This is however against a backdrop of significantly increasing needs in the region, especially related to the humanitarian response.

54. At its core, the WCA regional program aims to advance the SDGs by promoting universal access to SRH, and realizing reproductive rights. According to the results and resources framework for the WCA Regional Program, this is achieved by accelerating the reduction of³⁶

- unmet need for FP by 2025 (indicative resource needs: \$22.1million);
- preventable maternal deaths by 2025 (indicative resources needs: \$25.2 million); and
- GBV and harmful practices by 2025 (indicative resources needs: \$15.9 million);

In addition, a budget was allocated for organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Indicative resources: \$1.5 million).

55. However, based on the newly recommended strategies, the MTR proposed an updated budget plan, including revisions to the results and resources framework summarized in *Fig 8* below. The proposed budget is \$25.8 million, which is 60% less, with major reductions in Output 2: Quality of care and services (72% reduction), Output 5: Humanitarian action (65%), Output 4: Population change and data (52%), Output 6: Adolescents and youth (78%), and Output 3: Gender and social norms (58%).

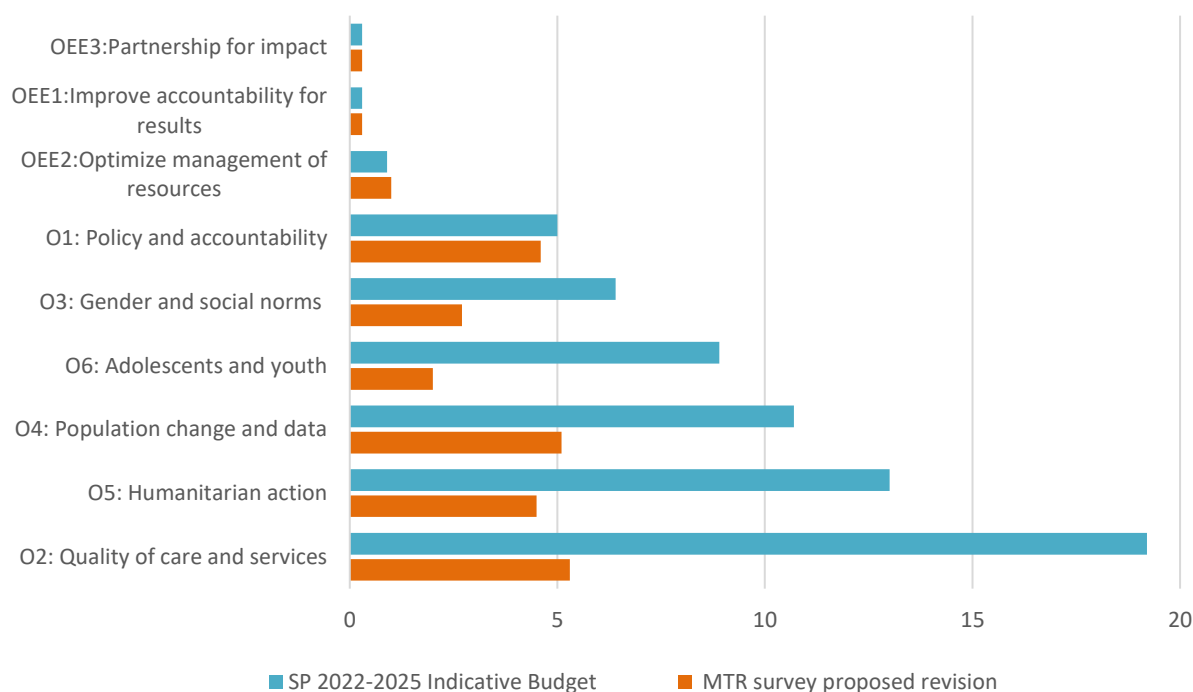
³³ Annex 1: Results and resources framework for the West and Central Africa Regional Program (2022-2025). UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, Annex 4: Global and regional Programs, 7. West and Central Africa regional Program

³⁴ WCA_Inputs template - 2023 ED annual report to the EB

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Annex 1: Results and resources framework for the West and Central Africa regional Program (2022-2025). UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, Annex 4: Global and regional Programs, 7. West and Central Africa regional Program

Fig 8. SP Budget vs. MTR Revised Budget(million USD)



56. The program focuses mainly on output-level results, without specific indicators or targets in the integrated results and resources framework to assess progress regarding the 3TRs (outlined in outcomes 1, 2 and 3). WCARO aims to deliver on its six strategic plan outputs to achieve these outcomes.

- For the policy and accountability output (output 1; indicative resource needs: \$5.0 million), the program encompasses country-level performance indicators that measure the integration of UNFPA core priorities and universal health coverage. It involves efforts towards sustainable financing for FP, including from domestic and external sources, integrating sexual and reproductive health into universal health coverage, and combating GBV and harmful practices through policy/legislative work and working with human rights systems and mechanisms (Universal Periodic Review, National Human Rights Commissions, etc.).
- As for the quality of care and services (output 2; indicative resource needs \$19.2 million), WCARO’s focus lies on increasing the use of innovative approaches to enhance sexual and reproductive health services, strengthening midwifery education, and implementing digitized logistics management systems. It is the output with the highest allocation of resources, highlighting the importance of quality service delivery for the region. Besides, this output uniquely emphasizes integration within the framework of the 3TRs.
- Key interventions under output 3 (gender and social norms; indicative resource needs \$6.4 million) support countries to address discriminatory gender and social norms, capacity building on social norms change approaches and programming to end FGM.
- Output 4 (population change and data) with indicative resource needs amounting to \$10.7 million underscores regional efforts in census alignment, population analysis training, vulnerability assessments, demographic observatories, and data sharing. It is noteworthy that this output is the one that mentions the most the 3TRs (in 3 out of 5 indicators).
- In the humanitarian sector (Output 5; indicative resource needs: \$13.0 million), WCARO emphasizes assistance for emergency preparedness, inter-agency coordination to prevent

and respond to GBV in humanitarian crises, implementation of the minimum initial service package for sexual and reproductive health in crises, and the establishment of regional coordination platforms for humanitarian efforts.

- Lastly, Output 6 (adolescents and youth; indicative resource needs: \$8.9 million) focus on updating school-based Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) curricula, developing or strengthening national mechanisms for out-of-school CSE, and implementing programs addressing adolescent pregnancies and child marriage.

57. In addition, three outputs focus on enhancing organizational effectiveness and efficiency, with improved programming for results (OEE1), optimized management of resources (OEE2), and expanded partnerships for impact (OEE3). Key priorities included the increase in results-based management certification among country offices, alongside consistently high peer-reviewed ratings for Country Program Documents (CPDs) and evaluation reports. In addition, the region aims to meet annual targets for non-core RM and see growth in partnerships contributing to sustainable financing of transformative results. Additionally, there was a specific target to increase online engagement through the UNFPA WCARO website, along with expanding mainstream media outreach.

2.5 The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025

58. As part of UNFPA's monitoring and evaluation systems, an internally led Mid Term Review of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was conducted. The purpose was to evaluate progress, identify achievements, and pinpoint obstacles hindering SP goals. In this assessment, the Policy and Strategy Division (PSD), a) analysed progress toward the 3TRs, b) reviewed CPDs from 2022 and 2023, and findings from evaluations and audits conducted during 2022-2023, and c) carried out a Global SP implementation Survey and focus group discussions, leading to the identification of 12 strategic priorities for 2024-2025.³⁷ Notable progress was made in achieving the targets defined, according to the MTR team, however, WCA remains the region with the slowest progress.³⁸ The bullets below describe the level of acceleration required:

- TR1: Progress must be 82 times faster to eliminate the unmet need for FP.
- TR2: Progress must be 54 times faster to eliminate preventable maternal deaths.
- TR3: must be 45 times faster to eliminate CM and 10 times faster to eradicate FGM.

59. The SP implementation survey³⁹ also identified gaps in WCA, with respect to threats to accelerate the 3TRs, where the WCA proportion⁴⁰ was higher than the UNFPA average:

- Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure
- Inadequate human capital
- Poor safety and security
- Lack of stakeholders' commitment and support

The survey also reported opportunities to accelerate the 3TRs, where the WCA proportion⁴¹ was lower than the UNFPA average. These were strong human capital and a conducive donor environment.

³⁷ Report_SP 2022-2025 MTR workshop Istanbul. Nov 2023

³⁸ Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Inception Report. UNFPA

³⁹ SP 2022-2025 office implementation survey 2023

⁴⁰ Proportion of offices that identified threats existent in their countries to accelerate the 3TRs

⁴¹ Proportion of offices that identified opportunities existent in their countries to accelerate the 3TRs

60. Further, the MTR report highlighted that two of six SP outputs were not achieved in 2022, three of the six SP accelerators were not widely used, and major knowledge and implementation gaps exist with respect to three of the twelve Strategic Shifts.⁴² Outputs with significant gaps (compared to 2022 targets) are: 1) Output 3: Gender and social norms (By 2025, strengthened mechanisms and capacities of actors and institutions to address discriminatory gender and social norms to advance gender equality and women's decision-making). Gaps were identified in promoting positive masculinities and the capacity for changing discriminatory social and gender norms. 2) Output 4: Population change and data (By 2025, strengthened data systems and evidence that take into account population changes and other megatrends (including ageing and climate change), in development policies and Programs, especially those related to SRHR). Gaps were identified in health information management, disaggregated incidence data regarding GBV, analysis of population, and megatrends, vulnerability assessments and geo-referenced data.

61. Based on the MTR report, the three accelerators that were not widely used are:

- Resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts
- Partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, and financing
- Innovation and digitalization

62. Based on the MTR report, approximately 30% of offices reported low or no familiarity with these strategic shifts:

- Integrating the effects of megatrends into programming
- Humanitarian, development and peace complementarity
- Funding to funding and financing

63. As a result of the above MTR findings, the WCARO produced 8 acceleration papers outlining the WCA region's vision to achieve the 3TRs by 2025. Regional initiatives to accelerate the 3TRs and position UNFPA's mandate were also identified, these include:

- Centrality of population for peace, people, prosperity and planet
- Tailored support to Middle Income Countries and Small Business units.
- Fit-for-Purpose in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response
- Scale up of capacity strengthening and technical assistance.

⁴² SP/IB MTR Strategic Priorities PPT. Aug 2023

3. Methodology

64. This chapter describes the evaluation approach, proposed methods, data collection and analysis processes, as well as study limitations. See detailed methodology in [Annex 7](#).

3.1 Methodological Approach

3.1.1 Design

65. This formative evaluation utilized mixed-methods, including:

- A **regional survey** of all 23 countries in the region.
- **Key informant interviews** with UNFPA personnel across WCARO, Country Offices and Business Units in Headquarters (HQ), and key informants across comparator” agencies at regional level.
- **Focus Group Discussions** (FGDs) with select country representatives and deputy representatives and regional social and gender norms experts.
- **Country missions** to select countries.
- **Desk review** of strategic documents, programmatic documents and research/evaluation reports at regional and country level.

Further, all data sources were utilized to develop a **deep-dive analysis**⁴³ of two priority challenges. Lastly, the evaluation was **participatory and utilization-focused as it was implemented** to provide evidence to influence the design of the next strategic plan. It also emphasized a strong stakeholder engagement focus from design to dissemination, with key stakeholders involved at different stages.

3.1.2 Participants

66. About 242 respondents participated in the evaluation, including 31 key informants (Global-5, Regional-26), 19 FGD participants, 81 country mission participants as well as 111 country survey participants with a range of 1-13 participants jointly completing the submissions per country. See [Table 5](#) below for the distribution of participants across methods.

Table 5: Number of respondents per level and data collection activity

Organizational Level	KII	FGD	Country Mission	Country Survey	Total
Global	5				5
Regional- Internal	18	2 (Social & Gender Norms Experts)			20
Regional- External	8	4 (Social & Gender Norms Experts)			12
Country Level-Internal		2 (Social & Gender Norms Experts) 9 (CO Leaders)	29 (Ghana) 19 (Mali)	111	170
Country Level- External		2 (Social & Gender Norms Experts)	19 (Ghana) 14 (Mali)		35
Total	31	19	81	111	242

⁴³ Deep Dive is a method where an individual or team conducts an intense, in-depth analysis of a certain problem or subject. A deep dive analysis has been recorded as 'a strategy of immersing a team rapidly into a situation, to provide solutions or create ideas. Deep dive analysis will normally focus in areas such as process, organization, leadership and culture.

3.1.3 Analysis

67. Prior to analysis, the evaluation team developed an evidence database that compiled data from all sources. The evidence database enabled validation of findings from different sources, and subsequently triangulating primary qualitative and quantitative findings with documented sources. The evidence database is provided as a separate document (see *Annex 12*).

68. Subsequently, data analysis and synthesis were conducted by evaluation question, systematically analysing quantitative, qualitative and document review data for each of the 20 sub-questions which served as the primary units of analysis. The sub-questions represent the accelerators, strategic shifts, enablers, and barriers, as well as the forward-looking perspective. The analysis examined the relevance and levels of operationalization of accelerators and strategic shifts across the region, and also attempted to showcase similarities and differences in operationalization across different country contexts, with specific country examples provided where feasible. The findings based on the sub-questions were further synthesized to create succinct high-level findings for the core evaluation questions.

3.2 Risks and Limitations

69. The RPE team has identified and mitigated a few important risks to this evaluation. These include:

- The in-coherent SP terminology, with definitions and classifications of strategic shifts and accelerators overlapping and a degree of incoherence in how some of the shifts are used in different parts of the plan. This resulted in variations in how key informants understood and defined these terms and had the potential to impact the quality of KII responses. This was addressed using the conceptual framework developed by the SPE team to clarify strategic shifts, accelerators, and enablers. In addition to utilizing this clarification, the evaluation team included a preliminary question to confirm the understanding of participants on these key terms prior to questioning.
- Another risk was recent staff changes and limited institutional memory, due to restructuring in the WCARO, with majority of key personnel roles replaced, and some long-standing personnel who designed and led the implementation of the current Regional Program recently separated. This affected the depth of information provided in some regional respondent interviews as these personnel were new and only just getting onboarded. This was addressed through prioritizing interviews with some of the remaining long-term personnel in WCARO, conducting KIIs with key Global and select country respondents who also held institutional memory, as well as document review.
- Lastly, the region-wide country survey utilized self-reported data from countries, with the expectation of some level of response bias. This has however been addressed by triangulation with other sources.

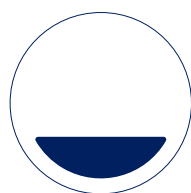
4. Findings

70. This chapter is structured by the four core questions the evaluation set out to answer. For each evaluation question, a set of summary findings is provided that responds to the core question more broadly. This section also prioritizes the presentation of specific findings for the nine evaluation sub-questions that represent accelerators/strategic shifts. Summary reports for the country missions and the deep dive analysis are presented in [Annex 1, 2](#) and [3](#), Lessons Learned in [Annex 4](#), and detailed findings for all other sub-questions are presented in [Annex 5](#).

71. Due to the significant overlap between accelerators and strategic shifts discussed earlier, the report uses these terms interchangeably, and focuses primarily on the actual themes they represent, instead of their categorization as accelerators or strategic shifts. The RPE team has also established an operationalization progress rating for strategic shifts, and these are presented with the corresponding findings (see top right of strategic shift titles). Ratings are either nascent, developing, or mature, based on the incorporation of strategic shifts/accelerators in relevant plans, available capacity to operationalize them, implementation of activities that indicate operationalization, and gaps in operationalization. Strategic shift ratings indicate that they meet at least 3 of the conditions in the assigned rating.

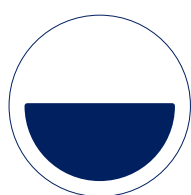
Fig 9. Strategic Shifts/Accelerator Progress Rating Key

Nascent



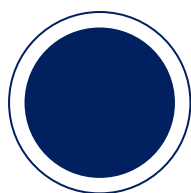
- Limited visibility in Regional Program Plan/Acceleration Papers and CPDs
- Limited or no expert staff
- New capacity strengthening efforts towards utilizing the strategic shift
- New initiatives/approaches being introduced
- A few examples of activities towards utilizing this strategic shift in progress

Developing



- Well integrated into Regional Program Plan /Acceleration Papers and CPDs
- Inadequate numbers/quality of expert staff
- Ongoing capacity strengthening efforts
- Varied examples of recent improved initiatives/approaches with corresponding program activities utilizing the strategic shift
- Some gaps/opportunities to better leverage the strategic shift

Mature



- Well integrated into Regional Program Plan /Acceleration Papers and CPDs
- Implementation capacity well established with teams of experts
- Varied examples of recent improved initiatives/approaches with corresponding program activities utilizing the strategic shift
- Minor opportunities to improve operationalization may exist

4.1 Strategic Shifts and Accelerators Operationalization

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent have the strategic shifts and accelerators been relevant, clearly defined, and operationalized in the Regional Program, and supported the achievement of 3TRs and ICPD PoA priorities at regional and country levels?

72. All strategic shifts and accelerators are relevant and especially needed in West and Central Africa, with the region lagging behind on all 3TRs, compared to other regions. WCARO led a process to clearly define strategic shifts, through the production of a set of acceleration papers to strengthen the Regional Program, and to effectively steer the regional program. Majority of countries have defined and unpacked strategic shifts in their recent CPDs, implementation and monitoring plans.

73. Although accelerators have largely been incorporated in regional and country plans/strategies, their levels of operationalization vary, especially as several strategic shifts are ongoing areas of work that are being enhanced through amplifications or adjustments in how they are implemented, whilst a few others are relatively new areas.

74. Efforts toward operationalization include a major human resources realignment of the regional office and leadership of several countries in the region, increasing capacity to implement the strategic plan and its associated strategic shifts.

75. The region is already experiencing some early successes in operationalizing some accelerators, notably the 3TRs alignment accelerator, and the LNOB accelerator. These have been better implemented, although they are still rated as developing. Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, SRH and GBV response scale up and strengthening partnerships, and humanitarian preparedness and response capacity strengthening, are developing areas, with ongoing work in these areas being improved or scaled up. The other accelerators/shifts (Funding to Funding and Financing (F2FF) agenda, UNFPA's normative role, integrating the effects of megatrends and HDP nexus programming) are still nascent in the region, with urgent capacity needs to effectively utilize these accelerators/shifts. See summary progress rating in *Fig 10*, based on the incorporation of strategic shifts/accelerators in relevant plans, capacity to operationalize, implementation of enhanced activities, and gaps in operationalization. Further details are provided in subsequent sections.

76. Strategic shifts/accelerators are contributing to progress on the 3TRs and ICPD PoA, but are not yet fully optimized in the region, as some CPDs were only recently approved, or at early stages of implementation, there are several new regional office personnel just settling in, persistent human resource gaps, and funding constraints.

Fig 10. RPE Strategic Shifts Progress Rating



Aligning focus on achieving the 3TRs

Q1.1. To what extent are the Regional and Country Programs systematically aligning their focus to achieving the 3TRs?



Finding 1: UNFPA WCARO and Country Office’s planning and programming are now fully aligned to the 3TRs, with new capacity and partnerships introduced to incorporate and implement this accelerator.

77. This strategic shift has concentrated the focus of the region on the 3TRs and associated SDGs, with almost absolute alignment of UNFPA WCA’s portfolio. It has been clearly defined and systematically operationalised, with planning, resource allocation, programming and monitoring now focused on interventions to achieve the 3TRs. Countries are also establishing deliberate partnerships to improve capacity to implement the 3TRs. The country survey found that 91% of countries see this strategic shift as highly relevant (52%) or relevant (39%). Further, 82% of countries have incorporated this strategic shift in their CPD, and are already implementing it.

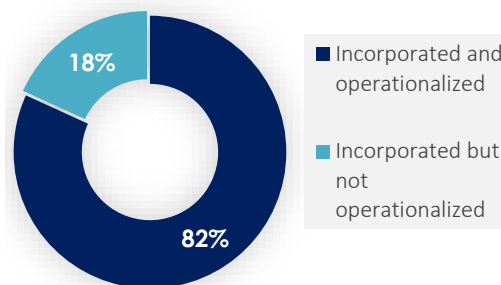
78. Countries that have incorporated this strategic shift, but are not yet implemented it (18%), cite resource constraints, including unfilled staff positions (e.g. Gender, and Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmoNC) specialists), and funding limitations. There is however growing capacity in the regional office and countries through realignment processes; recruiting specialists with the right skills to implement activities to achieve the 3TRs. In addition, 87% of countries in the region are receiving some support (57%) or significant support (30%) from the regional office to operationalize this shift.



Finding 2: Resources in the region are insufficient to tackle all 3TRs with the same level of intensity.

79. There is general consensus on the inadequacy of resources to address all 3TRs in the same way, especially with gaps in human resources and service delivery^{44,45} implementation needs. These constraints indicate a need to identify tipping points in intervention selection and prioritization, toward higher impact interventions. Prioritizing may also mean placing more emphasis on one of the 3TRs per each country's context e.g. Maternal Mortality In Chad and Nigeria, Unmet FP need in Benin, FGM in Guinea, Child Marriage in Niger, or GBV in Sierra Leone. This challenge also suggests a need to consider increasing the focus on UNFPA's normative role as a strategic partner to countries, in tandem with increasingly targeted service delivery efforts in priority contexts.

Fig 11. Operationalization of 3TRs Alignment
(% of countries in the region)



Finding 3: There is room to further strengthen the integration of population and data across the 3TRs, with opportunities to use data to amplify programming across the three result areas.

80. Population and data (P&D) are not adequately integrated in the 3TRs alignment. There has been good progress in implementing key P&D initiatives especially large country surveys including Censuses, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) etc. The regional office has also invested significantly in censuses with a record number of census undertaken during the Program cycle. There is however a missing link in integrating/aligning population and data activities to the 3TRs, and this as a missed opportunity to enhance evidence-based advocacy. There are now ongoing preparations towards having a common research agenda for the region that focuses on key 3TRs themes including FGM in the humanitarian context, positive masculinity, and midwifery.

Reaching populations left behind” and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first”

Q1.2. To what extent are the Regional and Country Programs focusing systematically and coherently on “populations left behind”?

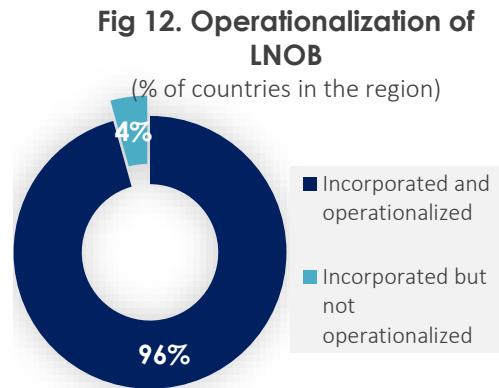


Finding 4: The introduction of the LNOB and Human Rights analysis tool by UNFPA HQ and WCARO, as well also other country-specific processes have enabled systematic and coherent planning and implementation of this strategic shift, there is however a need to strengthen analysis, especially better assessing intersectionality.

⁴⁴ The RPE team defines service delivery as any activity that improves outcomes primarily by increasing inputs such as commodity provision, health/social worker deployment etc. Systems strengthening is accomplished by more comprehensive changes to performance drivers such as policies and regulations, organizational structures, and relationships across the health/education or social system to motivate changes in behavior and/or allow more effective use of resources to improve multiple services.

⁴⁵ Chee G, Pielemeier N, Lion A, Connor C. Why differentiating between health system support and health system strengthening is needed. *Int J Health Plann Manage.* 2013 Jan-Mar;28(1):85-94. doi: 10.1002/hpm.2122. Epub 2012 Jul 9. PMID: 22777839; PMCID: PMC3617455.

81. The focus on the LNOB accelerator has enabled countries to develop robust plans that identify and primarily target populations left behind, with resources now largely focused on these populations. Countries are increasing and expanding their reach of vulnerable populations. These range from women and young people, to the elderly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), People Living with Disability (PWDs), women with fistula, victims of GBV/FGM, and sexual and gender minorities, and those unreached by the government or facing political discrimination. There is also an increasing focus on either rural or urban populations per country context. An additional benefit of the LNOB accelerator is that it facilitates the achievement of results with resources (human resources and funding) somewhat optimized. The country survey found that 91% of countries see this accelerator as highly relevant (61%) or relevant (30%).



There is also an increasing focus on either rural or urban populations per country context. An additional benefit of the LNOB accelerator is that it facilitates the achievement of results with resources (human resources and funding) somewhat optimized. The country survey found that 91% of countries see this accelerator as highly relevant (61%) or relevant (30%).

82. Ten (10) recently approved CPDs by WCARO have utilized the LNOB and Human Rights analysis tool. LNOB assessment is also part of the CPD quality assurance/peer review process. There is mixed knowledge about these tools with some countries only learning about it through the RPE. Countries have also implemented additional evidence-based processes in planning and identifying populations left behind, with an emphasis on areas with the poorest indices and the most vulnerable and high-risk sub-sets of these populations. There are however gaps in LNOB operationalization, including the absence of M&E indicators to measure LNOB and verify LNOB implementation, a need to improve analysis related to intersectionality, further disaggregation of analysis with respect to capturing some missed populations e.g. PWD, and other analysis such as Benefit-incidence analysis that assesses which geographic regions and/or populations are benefitting from different programming approaches and investments by governments, including through domestic and donor-supported funding.

83. Ninety-six (96%) of country office have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator, the largest proportion compared to other accelerators. The only country that incorporated, but has not implementing this shift, just had its CPD approved. In addition, 65% of countries in the region are receiving some support (52%) or significant support (13%) from the regional office to operationalize this shift, however 35% receive either limited or no support.

Finding 5: Countries are utilizing specialized Implementing Partners (IPs) with expertise and networks to reach specific population types, and are also introducing specialized interventions/delivery models.

84. Country offices are selecting IPs that are specialized to specific population types and locations. These range from youth specialized, LGBTQI+ specialized, traditional and religious leader-specialized, to humanitarian operations-specialization. There is a diversification of partners with some shift from predominantly Government partners to now include non-government partners that have better access or operate in non-government-controlled areas.

There are still gaps in IPs' capacity to address discriminatory social and gender norms, with ongoing capacity building in the region, as detailed in paragraphs 93 and 94 below.

85. COs are also implementing specialized interventions e.g. mobile clinics in Gabon, digital supply chain innovations in Sao Tome and Principe, using commercial motorcycle riders to reach the last mile in Liberia, disability-inclusive Programs in Sierra Leone, scaling up humanitarian response in Mali with a Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM); a project delivering mental health services in humanitarian areas in Burkina Faso; and a program focusing on Kayayei (head porters in markets, who are mostly first-time young mothers, pregnant girls, survivors of GBV and PSEA in Ghana). Some of these initiatives commenced prior to this SP period, but have been reinforced and scaled up as a result of the LNOB focus.

86. The Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project is also utilizing incentive programs to train and retain healthcare professionals in underserved communities, as well as experimenting with the use of drones to deliver products, particularly during the rainy season when traditional routes may be inaccessible.

Finding 6: There are also varied examples of policy advocacy efforts to support the creation of an enabling legal and policy environment to reach populations left behind.

87. Country offices have partnered with other UN agencies, government actors, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to increase access to specific vulnerable population groups, notably, addressing the repeal of the FGM act in the Gambia and the anti-LGBTQI+ bill in Ghana; the popularization of the Mouebarara law in Congo to combat violence against women and girls; and a partnership between UNFPA, the Ministry of Social Welfare, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), to facilitate the inclusion of disability issues in national development through policy advocacy in Sierra Leone.

Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities

Q1.3. To what extent are the discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities being addressed in the Regional Program?



Finding 7: Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities, is the most critical accelerator in the WCA region, as it is a clear underlying factor limiting progress toward the 3TRs.

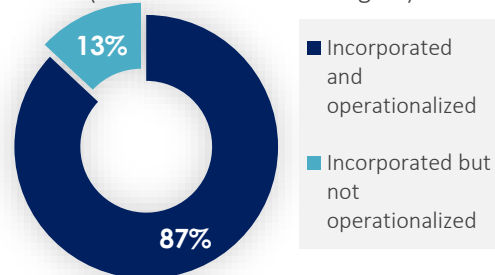
88. This accelerator was identified as the most critical of the three that were listed as the most relevant in the context of West and Central Africa. The other two are “reaching those furthest behind first” and “humanitarian preparedness and response capacity.” All three are however interconnected with women and girls often featuring as a key group in populations left behind, and as one of the worst affected populations during humanitarian crises. Discriminatory social and gender norms are a key underlying factor limiting, and in some cases regressing 3TRs progress in the region, especially since addressing these norms are key to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, which is the foundation for achieving the 3TRs. Social and gender norms experts in the region further reinforced this by

stating that establishing new norms, with these precursors (increased collective action, social cohesion, and peaceful communication) ultimately results in improvements in the 3TRs, as witnessed in their programs. Ninety-six percent (96%) of countries in the region see this accelerator as highly relevant (74%) or relevant (22%); the highest rates of relevance compared to other accelerators.

Finding 8: Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms has been largely operationalized, considering that interventions under this theme have been implemented as a core part of UNFPA’s program historically, with recent strategic plans only increasing emphasis and better defining its operationalization.

89. A review of UNFPA’s existing programs reveals related CPD outputs across all countries in the region and a variety of programs already tackling this strategic shift, including large regional programs such as the Spotlight initiative, SWEDD, joint UN programs on Child Marriage and FGM, and several country programs which include advocacy to influence legal frameworks, institutional capacity building for key government departments, engaging community social structures (especially traditional and religious leaders), husband schools (positive masculinity), supporting the scale up of one-stop centres, and empowering and building coalitions of women and youth groups/CSOs. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of countries in the region have incorporated this accelerator in their CPDs and are operationalizing it. The others have incorporated it into their plans, with recently approved plans or preparatory processes underway to commence operationalization.

Fig 13. Operationalization of addressing discriminatory social & gender norms
(% of countries in the region)



Finding 9: Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms is being implemented in an integrated manner, with a holistic multi-sectoral service delivery approach being rolled out at regional and county office levels, and capacity building provided for effective integration. There are however still some inconsistencies in integration.

90. There are different levels of integration of initiatives to address discriminatory social and gender norms, and these are indicative of a transition from single-issue interventions to addressing gender norms holistically. This approach was one of the key changes made post-realignment by the regional office, with capacity building provided to all technical departments at the regional office and country offices on effectively integrating the human rights approach into their programs, with a goal to ensure FP and Maternal Neonatal Health (MNH) programs contribute to balancing power dynamics between men and women, and in turn, the improvements in the power balance increase access to these services. Regional programs such as the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programs in CM and FGM have also created a platform to create a common approach to integrating Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) at the regional level.

91. Another dimension of integration was the implementation of more holistic programming that integrates the multi-sectoral needs of women, adolescents, and youth. These comprise education, health, legal and economic empowerment initiatives e.g. the integrated management mechanism for GBV cases in Sao Tome and Principe; the multifaceted approach

to address adolescent pregnancy and child marriage, emphasizing education, SRH services, and empowerment in Sierra Leone; the holistic prevention, protection, care and socio-economic re-integration interventions for women, adolescents and young people in Senegal; and the women empowerment project in the Gambia that comprises economic empowerment, political participation, movement building and allyship programs with male champions.

92. Although the deployment of integrated efforts is well underway, the current results are mixed; whilst health and social workers are adopting rights-based approaches in their work, resistance and misunderstandings persist, particularly in remote areas where community dynamics have limited their effectiveness. There is some inconsistency in integration across sectors, indicating slower progress in other sectors (education, social) as compared to health-related areas.

Finding 10: Capacity for implementing this accelerator has increased in the region, especially related to gender. However, there is still a gap with social norms specialists, and a need to further strengthen partnerships with expert organizations.

93. There is increasing capacity in the region to address gender and social norms, with a growing portfolio of gender experts in the regional and country offices. There are however concerns that there is limited expertise on social norms change not only within WCARO, but across the organization, and a need to diversify expertise within country offices beyond medical and demographic fields. There have been capacity building efforts at regional and country offices including trainings to integrate human rights-based and GTA in programs with a variety of national stakeholders (government officials, community/traditional leaders, religious leaders, and youth and women's associations); regional workshops with national human rights institutions and mechanisms to enhance political engagements; building capacity of the Regional Office (RO) and Country Offices (COs) in monitoring human rights mechanisms; and lastly beneficiary empowerment through training on bodily autonomy for women and girls, life skills development, community awareness, as well as acknowledgement/certification of communities that have abandoned harmful practices. Eighty-three percent (83%) of countries in the region are receiving some support (70%) or significant support (13%) from the regional office to operationalize this accelerator.

94. Other UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNWOMEN are better equipped to address social norms per their long-standing expertise or larger expert pools. Current partnerships/ joint programs with these agencies and other Social and Behaviour Change communication (SBCC) focused organizations are filling the capacity gap, and should be scaled up and sustained going forward. In addition, there is a need for more value clarification trainings for UNFPA staff, partners, and service providers to increase confidence as they work with governments and communities to enable changes to their personal biases. The training will also clarify how the core values of UNFPA (gender equality, the right to a life free of GBV, survivor-centred approach, bodily autonomy for all women and adolescent girls, the right to diverse sexual orientation etc.) are inter-related and non-negotiable so that staff are better able to articulate these in diverse fora - regardless of their personal beliefs. In addition, a gap is also noted in applying gender-transformative approaches in UNFPA's recruitment and training processes.

Incorporating effects of megatrends, particularly population dynamics, urbanization, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, climate change, security, and digitalization



Q1.4. To what extent are the effects of megatrends, particularly but not limited to population dynamics, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, climate change, and insecurity, incorporated in Regional and Country Programming?

Finding 11: Incorporating the effect of megatrends is mostly addressed through evidence gathering and analysis, but less through implementation, and are viewed as a missed opportunity for not just UNFPA, but for the UN as a whole, as these present an opportunity to demonstrate the “One UN” approach, and are a pathway to achieving the ICPD PoA, the 6 transitions and sustainable development as a whole.

95. UNFPA has done a better job at addressing megatrends through its analysis processes, than in implementation. The ICPD PoA⁴⁶ and the 6 transitions⁴⁷ are mostly about addressing megatrends, making this strategic shift important to UNFPA’s mandate. Megatrends also provide an opportunity for collaboration and coordination with other UN agencies with complementary mandates, towards addressing the effects of megatrends. They have a bearing on how UNFPA positions itself within the UN programming framework. UNFPA’s Strategic Plan, Regional Plan, Acceleration Papers, and Country Program Documents adequately reflect consideration and analysis of megatrends. All countries find this accelerator to be highly relevant (70%) or relevant (30%).

96. There are gaps in evidence generation that are focused on megatrends, such as 1) The effects of megatrends on the 3TRs, 2) Linkages across megatrends, for instance, food insecurity in humanitarian crises/conflict and its effects on the 3TRs; as well as the effect of food security in humanitarian crises/conflict on internal (within Africa) and external migration trends, to understand the evolving demographic landscape and its implications, and lastly 3) Evidence generation on the rise in online violence and harassment using pornography. In addition, there is also a need for more systematic analysis and further data utilization, that enables a shift towards proactive approaches to adapt programming that addresses the effects of megatrends. This includes setting up environmental scanning particularly at regional levels, to identify trends and inform decision-making and advocacy.

Finding 12: Megatrends have a lower level of operationalization than other accelerators/shifts reviewed in this report, with some perceived difficulty in moving from analysis to implementation, with a more reactive approach. There has however been progress, with some megatrends experiencing more traction than others.

97. Seventy percent (70%) of countries in the region have incorporated and are implementing this strategic shift (the lowest proportion compared to other strategic shifts), 26% of countries have incorporated it in their plans, but not operationalized it, with ongoing ground work towards its implementation. The transition from planning to implementation seems slightly complicated, largely related to the limited capacity to address certain megatrends and the

⁴⁶ UNFPA (2014) Program of Action of the International Conference on Population Development 20th Anniversary Edition. isbn 978-0-89714-022-5.

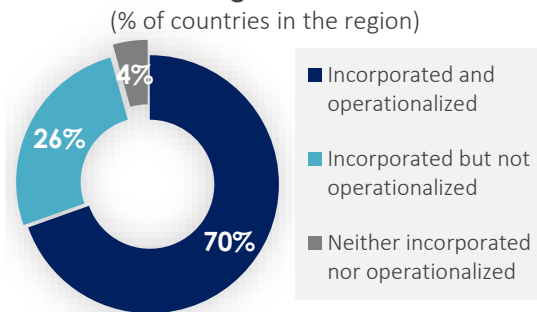
⁴⁷ UNSDG (2023) Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs. September 2023

need to establish or strengthen partnerships to address them. Both regional and country offices are in the process of further unpacking this accelerator in preparation for more systematic implementation, with realignment processes in progress.

98. Some megatrends have experienced more traction than others; traditionally population dynamics have been in focus, and there are also increasing numbers of digitalization projects. As

well as fewer interventions and partnerships to address food insecurity, and migration, and even fewer climate change initiatives. A regional project cited by many' is the SWEDD project which collectively addresses women's empowerment and the demographic dividend, depoliticizing issues around SRH. This program model should be replicated. There are also examples of country programs addressing food insecurity, climate change, and conflict, but most of these are not implemented comprehensively and proactively as an attempt to integrate megatrends. Instead, they are more reactive and related to responses to humanitarian crises. For instance, Chad CO received emergency funds to address food insecurity emergency. Also, Cameroon CO supported the government in managing rapid response efforts for a landslide in the north and floods in the Far North Region. There is consensus that program implementation in UNFPA is mostly focused on the 3TRs, with services to address the three results increasingly delivered in the context of humanitarian crises, food insecurity, massive population movements, conflict, and urbanization, and these megatrends are mostly addressed on the fringes of 3TRs programming per funding availability. There are however examples of more systematic planning and implementation of this strategic shift, for instance, the Transhumance project in Guinea-Bissau designed to tackle climate change and related inequalities; the Luxembourg-funded climate change and HDP-nexus project in Burkina Faso; as well as the launch of the Youth Action group on Climate change in Ghana, in partnership with the National Youth Authority.

Fig 14. Operationalization of incorporating effects of megatrends



Finding 13: Certain megatrends are becoming increasingly critical in the region, and are already being prioritized by regional and country offices and stakeholders. These include urbanization, climate change, conflict, and other humanitarian crises, as well as population dynamics which has been a sustained area of work.

99. The growth of urbanization in Africa, with 5 of the 8 fastest growing countries in the world (including Nigeria in WCA), per the recent State of World Population Report 2024. This has a myriad of implications; the increasing populations of these countries are likely to be in big cities; with concentrations of marginalized populations, pockets of poverty, and increasing SRH needs. The effects of urbanization are already very apparent in Accra, and Lagos, where major SRH issues are concentrated. This changing context suggests a potential shift from rural hard-to-reach locations to urban locations, especially urban slums where majority of marginalized populations reside. Country offices also alluded to the need for further investment in urbanization, in particular the Abidjan - Lagos corridor which is experiencing rapid rates of urbanization and corresponding population growth. There is also increasing incidence and resulting interconnected effects of climate change (flooding, deforestation), food insecurity, conflict, and massive migration, with the current programming in these areas

somewhat siloed; especially food insecurity. There are also anecdotes of an emerging trend of online violence and harassment (under the digitalization megatrend).

100. Regional and country programs have already begun addressing these trends; including activities such as mapping services and access to SRH services for vulnerable populations due to urbanization; assessment of changing flooding cycles and building in preparedness and response capacity in response to climate change; as well as education sessions to refugees / displaced people on how to replace trees at refugee camps.

Finding 14: There are ongoing efforts to build capacity and strengthen partnerships to enable better implementation of this strategic shift, and more support is required.

101. There is a range of regional and country-level initiatives, including: strengthening regional supply management capacity through the decentralization of the Supply Chain Management Unit (SCMU). This entails partnering with the WHO Emergency Hub and the UN World Food Program's (WFP) facilities for stock prepositioning in the region, towards more efficient delivery processes, especially for the humanitarian response. WCARO has already been leveraging UNICEF and WFP's more advanced supply systems, accessing their planes and warehouses for UNFPA commodities storage and distribution for specific programs. UNFPA is also actively working with the UN migration network in the region. In addition, 52% of countries in the region are receiving some support (30%) or significant support (22%) from the regional office to operationalize this accelerator, and 48% received either limited or no support (the highest proportion compared to other strategic shifts).

102. However, there are capacity gaps in the organization, including the number and type of personnel, as well as ways of working, especially as UNFPA's skill sets and current positioning (not just in WCARO), do not match the demand to address megatrends; also, there is a tendency to work in silos which is a barrier to cross-cutting areas such as megatrends. In addition, there were concerns raised about advisors replicating strategies from UNFPA HQ without adequate contextualization; lastly, there is also a lack of climate change expertise at regional and country offices, despite being one of the most impacted regions.

103. Regional and country offices have made investments in personnel recruitment and training, including recently hiring a regional Population Dynamics and Policy Advisor. This advisor has been tasked to lead this thematic area, and alongside other regional advisors is providing Technical Assistance (TA) to country offices on defining and incorporating the effects of megatrends into their programs; and rethinking program adaptations. The regional office also hosted a regional working group on how the megatrends affect food insecurity, launched the Regional Initiative on the Centrality of Population (RiCoP) to examine the interconnectedness between population dynamics, sustainable development and megatrends, and hosted webinars for countries on climate change and its effect on access to SRH and GBV. There are also several examples of country-level trainings for national agencies, for instance, disaster risk management workshops in Cameroon, hosted in partnership with other UN agencies, and Ghana CO's partnership with the National Youth Authority on climate change. UNFPA WCARO and its CO have also entered or are exploring partnerships to better implement this accelerator/shift, including joint programming with WFP to address food insecurity by strengthening food systems and simultaneously addressing youth unemployment in Ghana; a partnership with FAO to address climate change challenges in the

Gambia; WCARO exploring the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping vulnerable populations in partnership with UN HABITAT; as well as humanitarian response coordination with UNDP, UNWOMEN, and UNICEF across multiple countries.

Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming in the region

Q1.5a. To what extent has the Regional Program expanded humanitarian preparedness and response capacity in the region?

Q1.5b. To what extent has the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus programming been implemented in the region?



Finding 15: Expanding UNFPA’s humanitarian preparedness and response capacity is urgently required in the WCA region, with increasing crises in the region especially in the Sahel countries. This is well recognized by WCARO leadership, with a road map and steering committee already in place, clearly articulated in country CPDs and preparedness plans, however, the nexus approach is not adequately defined.

104. UNFPA WCARO is playing a unique role as GBV leader and facilitating the provision of SRH, GBV response, and other related services in emergencies, working alongside other actors providing complementary services. There is strong management support and extensive experience among leaders in implementing this accelerator, with a humanitarian preparedness and response road map and steering committee already in place within about a year with the new management. Most countries have this accelerator reflected in their CPDs and several countries have also conducted readiness assessments and developed preparedness and response action plans especially Sahel Countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad) and CAR. 78% of countries find this strategic shift relevant: highly relevant (52%) and relevant (26%).

105. There is inadequate elaboration of the nexus approach⁴⁸ from UNFPA HQ. It is also not clearly articulated in the strategic plan, however, the HDP nexus is defined within UNFPA as more of a complementary or continuum approach, where community resilience is built to enable quick adaptation or pivoting from development to humanitarian response and back. This approach requires a flexible mindset, to make these shifts among CO personnel, implementing partners, and service providers, alongside planned protected funding for humanitarian response.

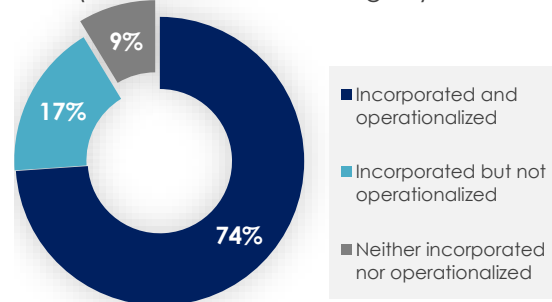
Finding 16: There has been notable progress in operationalizing this strategic shift, especially through increasing coordination efforts, the establishment of partnerships and response activities across humanitarian settings (floods, conflict, and forced population displacements), as well as preparedness planning in non-humanitarian contexts. There is a need to further improve preparedness capacity.

⁴⁸ OECD definition the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (Dual Nexus) is the concept of increased collaboration between organizations working in short term humanitarian aid and long-term international development and it has been promoted since 2016. (Triple Nexus) HDP (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) is defined as the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions. The peace component is linked more to conflicts.

106. There is increasing progress in the coordination of humanitarian efforts and response to crises in the WCA region. 74% of countries have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator, with Mali, CAR, Burkina Faso, Congo, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, and Mauritania having a sizeable portfolio of humanitarian response activities, mostly comprising SRH and GBV response in emergency settings, serving both IDPs and host communities. Countries that have not operationalized this accelerator are not characterized as humanitarian contexts, or do not have current humanitarian crises.

Fig 15. Operationalization of Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity

(% of countries in the region)



107. UNFPA country offices work jointly with other UN agencies and partners, galvanizing action with national and local actors, emphasizing alliance and network building. Several countries are positioning better in coordination of humanitarian response efforts and establishing relevant partnerships at country level e.g. the Gambia CO's partnership with the National Disaster Management Architecture and technical support roles in protection and health clusters; Mauritania CO working with other agencies under the lead of the UNHCR to mobilize resources for the Rapid Response Plan (RRP) for refugees, returnees and migrants; Sierra Leone CO's partnership with several line ministries to ensure that humanitarian response addresses SRH, prevention and response GBV and data availability; and Ghana CO also now part of the UN Inter-Agency Working Group on Emergency. There is more focus on coordination and response than on preparedness, indicating a need to further strengthen preparedness capacity, especially in countries that never experienced humanitarian crises. Efforts have however begun with planning and training ongoing in several of these countries. For instance, several countries including those not classified as humanitarian contexts, such as Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Gabon, and Senegal are implementing Minimum Initial Service Packages (MISPs) trainings. Further, Ghana, Gabon and Senegal have also conducted the MISP Readiness Assessment (MRA) which is a critical preparedness exercise that assesses a countries ability to provide a minimum package of SRH services in emergencies. Fifteen COs in the WCA region have conducted the MRA.

108. Countries are responding to crises such as floods, conflicts, epidemics, forced population displacements, serving refugees, returnees, IDPs and host populations affected by crises, especially vulnerable groups like children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Some countries are dealing with the spill over of asylum seekers/ refugees e.g. Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Mauritania and Togo. Interventions comprise preventive and response mechanisms for integrated sexual and reproductive health, GBV prevention, and social cohesion services, including the provision of dignity kits, providing medical equipment. There are some unique service provisions, such as mental health services in CAR and Nigeria; and the Rapid Response Program in Mali. Countries are also implementing the different elements of the nexus, but these are not necessarily integrated or labelled nexus when they are. Mali and CAR were however referenced as countries actively implementing the nexus approach

e.g. In Mali, IDPs are now benefitting from other development services beyond the humanitarian crises.

Finding 17: Humanitarian capacity is growing in the region, with increases in personnel numbers, country coverage, pools of experts and trainings provided for both preparedness and response efforts. However, there are still personnel gaps.

109. There is increasing capacity in the region at both the regional office and country offices with new personnel coming on board in the past 2 years. There are dedicated staff for GBV in emergencies and SRH in emergencies in some countries, in others these personnel still play dual roles, particularly in GBV programming and coordination, contrary to UNFPA's mandate advocating for their separation. Nigeria has dedicated PSEA, GBViE, SRH experts for humanitarian efforts; Burkina Faso has recruited a humanitarian team with a P5-level Humanitarian Coordinator; and Mauritania recruited a UNV humanitarian midwife. Some countries are deploying humanitarian personnel to sub-national level offices in crises locations e.g. Burkina Faso set up 4 sub-offices covering all humanitarian regions; and Mali has expanded their humanitarian response to new humanitarian zones in the country. Despite these improvements, the current staffing across the region is still inadequate, linked to inadequate funding for humanitarian activities and an over-reliance on UNFPA core funds for humanitarian response which are inadequate. WCARO is conducting workshops and providing technical support to strengthen available personnel in countries. Majority (73%) of countries also receiving some support (52%) or significant support (31%) from the regional office towards implementing this strategic shift.

110. The region is also utilizing the surge roster (comprises UNFPA, other UN agencies and other NGO personnel who have been capacitated for quick deployment). There are language barriers in the SURGE pool with fewer French speaking experts, and more of the humanitarian crises in francophone countries. This is already being tackled with a recent training (April 2024) which onboarded 22 French speaking qualified humanitarian staff onto the UNFPA surge roster. In addition, a new mechanism Global Emergency Response Team (GERT) has been set up at the Global level that is also available for very large-scale crises. However, crises within the WCA region are often of a lower threshold so have not qualified for GERT deployment. Also, these crises are protracted, which suggest a need to have a dedicated team for humanitarian response in the region to complement the SURGE.

Finding 18: There are funding constraints for humanitarian programming in the region, linked to limited donor interest and an over-reliance on UNFPA's core funds. Some countries however experienced improved funding levels.

111. There are widely acknowledged funding constraints for humanitarian programming across the region, with UNFPA's areas of work not often aligned with the core interests of traditional humanitarian donors. Also, the recent political transitions in the region have made donors more cautious. There is also a misconception that core funds suffice to support humanitarian efforts, with lesser efforts for fundraising here. However, two countries (Burkina Faso and Mali) experienced significant increase in their funding for humanitarian efforts from 2019 to 2023 and 2020 to 2024 respectively.

Partnerships accelerating progress on 3TRs and ICPD PoA in the region

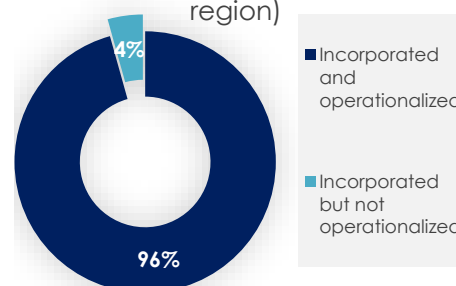
Q 1.6 To what extent and under which conditions have Regional Program regional and country partnerships accelerated progress on 3TRs and the ICPD PoA in the region?



Finding 19: UNFPA WCARO and its country offices work with an extensive network of implementation partnerships, have effective collaboration with other regions through South-South and Triangular Cooperation frameworks, and making deliberate efforts to strengthen capacity to foster effective partnerships.

112. UNFPA has a wide range of partnerships, these include partnerships with country governments, donors, other UN agencies, private sector, academia, IFIs, CSOs (including youth and women’s organizations), media, religious and traditional institutions etc. These partnerships are however largely focused on implementing programs as donors or recipients. All countries find this accelerator/shift relevant (74% highly relevant and 26% relevant). 96% of countries have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator; primarily referring to being funded by or funding others.

Fig 16. Operationalization of partnerships
(% of countries in the region)



113. There are also several successful implementation partnerships at regional level, including the MUSKOKA project implemented in partnership with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and WHO. The recent partnership with Tostan⁴⁹, working on addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, as well as the relationship with WAHO focused on scaling up FP services and sustaining commodity security in the region. There are also sustained relationships with Government, CSO and NGO partners at country level, and countries are also expanding their partnership base, with increasing engagements with international financial institutions, and private sector organizations (although efforts here are still limited, with a smaller private sector pool as compared to other regions on the continent). There is definitely a focus on maintaining and further strengthening these partnerships.

114. Capacity to strengthen partnerships has also improved in the region, with the recent appointment of a Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnership Advisor (RM&SPA) in the regional office (after a 1-year gap) and a few Partnership Officers at country level, who sometimes also play dual roles (e.g. communication, M&E). Some country offices have also developed Resource Mobilization (RM) and partnership frameworks/strategies e.g. Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, and The Gambia, amongst others. In some cases, this is a combined RM and partnership strategy. The South-South and Triangular Cooperation was also highlighted by many countries in the region as being effective in technical and financial RM for Program delivery, covering a variety of issues including collaborations on cross-border conflict, disability, fistula programming, experience sharing by midwives, and logisticians amongst others. Sierra Leone and Mauritania have funding partnerships with the Government of China, supporting quality improvement initiatives in health facilities and private clinics

⁴⁹ <https://tostan.org/programs/>

respectively. Majority (69%) of countries are receiving some support (52%) or significant support (17%) from the regional office towards implementing this strategic shift.

Finding 20: UNFPA WCARO and its country offices are utilizing the partnerships lever to accelerate progress on the 3TRs, however this is mostly through donor-recipient relationships. However, there is a gradual paradigm shift from traditional implementation partnerships to more strategic partnerships, with nascent initiatives redefining engagement norms towards optimizing these relationships for greater impact.

115. Partnerships as an accelerator is described by several leaders in the region and at headquarters as more about strategic level relationships with key institutions, that can influence funding and policy decisions, and indicated a need for UNFPA to both build these types of relationships, and redefine existing relationships with this mindset. The current spectrum of partnerships are heavily program implementation-focused, however strategic partnerships are needed for UNFPA to effectively play its normative role and bring about normative change. The primary targets for this evolution are the International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and African Development Bank, and secondarily other development partners. UNFPA already has donor- recipient relationships with IFIs, and now aims to evolve this into technical partnerships for technical advisory and joint advocacy on the financing agenda for countries.

116. This also applies to CSO relationships, which have already been effective in relatively smaller scale advocacy and implementation efforts. WCARO and its country offices are working on scaling up this collaboration through alliance building towards galvanizing a movement for universal SRHR coverage, with an ownership and sustainability mindset. There is also a need to better balance resourcing government and CSO/NGO partners with CSOs and NGOs better able to reach some marginalized communities that have limited access to services due to the absence of public infrastructure or the presence of conflict.

117. There are also organic changes in the dynamics of working with government stakeholders, with these stakeholders demonstrating increasing ownership of programs, creating an opportunity for UNFPA to further strengthen ownership and sustainability, with a focus on facilitating increasing management capacity and domestic RM. The Ministries of Finance are more active in their role of aligning country programs to the cooperative framework, and countries in this region have adapted well to these changes, by cultivating new relationships with the Ministry of Finance, strategically engaging them in program design, IP onboarding, sharing program updates and involving them in advocacy processes.

Finding 21: UNFPA has developed strong relationships with other related UN agencies through joint programs, however, its positioning in regional and national coordination platforms needs to be strengthened, to enable increased visibility and influence collaboration initiatives to better capture its mandate areas.

118. UNFPA has implemented many programs with other UN agencies at national, regional and the global levels evidencing its strong collaboration with these agencies, such as the UN Joint programs for CM and FGM at the global level, the regional MUSKOKA project in partnership with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and WHO, and a myriad of in-country collaborations with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNDP, WFP, The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UNESCO etc. These initiatives need to be expanded and sustained, and there

are additional opportunities to optimize these partnerships, including leveraging the regional supply management capacities of WHO, UNICEF, and WFP, exploring meaningful ways to harness the advanced Social Norms expertise at UNICEF and UNWOMEN or other global SBCC experts.

119. UNFPA is playing an increasing coordination role in several inter-agency groups for its mandate areas in the region, especially as lead of the GBV sub-cluster at regional level, a member of the gender theme group with aspirations to lead this, and several thematic groups at country level. UNFPA has a weaker presence in other coordination forums such as the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Health Cluster in terms of the level of influence there, and this has been linked to the need for stronger advocacy skills. There is also a need for more visibility of UNFPA in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, ensuring UNFPA's mandate areas are adequately incorporated, with women's rights prioritised amongst others.

Finding 22: Changes in the global funding landscape, and longstanding fundraising challenges in the WCA region have prompted the need for new funding partners, with country offices looking to the private sector.

120. The decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) globally is also affecting this region, with key informants highlighting the need to explore new donor relationships with more flexible funding and less transaction costs (with respect to proposal requirements and monitoring/reporting burden). There are nascent effort to engage the private sector, especially at country level, with some countries already increasing their private sector engagement (especially banks and telecommunication companies) to fund programs. These include Dangote Foundation in Nigeria, telecommunication companies (Moove Africa and Airtel) in Chad, Orange Foundation in Guinea, a telecommunication company in CAR, as well as Access Bank, Fidelity Bank Prudential Life Insurance Group, and telecommunication companies (MTN and AT) in Ghana.

121. There are internal barriers to effectively engaging the private sector, primarily the lengthy due diligence processes in the organization. This timeline deters private sector actors who prefer streamlined efficient interactions. There is also a significant missed opportunity to engage the large extractives private sector in the region (approximately 90% of economic revenue in the region) due to UNFPA's policy restrictions. UNICEF has been able to access these resources for their programs in the region, with due diligence applied in their engagement with the private sector.

Finding 23: UNFPA's partnership approach may be too prescriptive and narrowly focused, according to implementing partners, potentially limiting effectiveness of programs. Others indicated a need for increased opportunities to input into UNFPA's strategic plan.

122. UNFPA's partnership approach was described as too prescriptive and narrow in focus by two regional partners, with concurrence from some UNFPA staff. They described restrictions to very specific interventions, and limited flexibility to expand their scope to include other program elements towards delivering more holistic programs and fostering lasting changes in social and gender norms e.g. focusing on or expecting a result (public declarations), without ensuring the entire process (holistic methodology and community trust building) is supported. They describe a more impactful approach that works best as a full package. Another described limited flexibility on reviewing research questions towards a more

comprehensive study that effectively explored underlying factors and better problem identification. Two other regional partners recommended closer involvement in UNFPA’s design processes, as once the SP is finalized there is less flexibility in redefining the scope of programming. There have however been improvements in engagement including participating in recent strategic planning consultations as well as courtesy calls to partner regional/head offices. Partners emphasized the need for accessibility to UNFPA’s leadership at regional and country level.

Scaling up the provision of high-quality, comprehensive SRH information and services and multi-sectoral response to GBV in the region

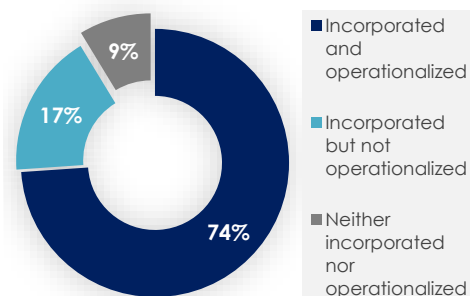
Q 1.7 Have the regional and country Programs scaled up the provision of high-quality, human rights focused comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, and multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence in the region



Finding 24: Scaling up human rights-focused comprehensive SRH information and services and a multi-sectoral response to GBV is largely viewed as an output not a strategic shift, with several already ongoing activities prior to this strategic plan period, and slight improvements in implementation approaches.

123. This strategic shift is viewed more as an output that other strategic shifts/accelerators were contributing to, as clearly outlined in CPDs. All countries find this accelerator/shift relevant (61% highly relevant, 35% relevant and 4% find it somewhat relevant). 74% of countries have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator. Majority (74%) of countries are receiving some support (57%) or significant support (17%) from the regional office towards implementing this strategic shift.

Fig 17. Operationalization of scaling SRH & multi-sectoral GBV response
(% of countries in the region)



124. There are a host of activities and interventions geared towards this scale up with limited or no changes in how these activities were previously implemented. A few examples include:

- Expanding the implementation of CSE for adolescents, and young people in and out of school, in Sao Tome and Principe, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Congo Brazzaville.
- Better integration of reproductive health, FP, and GBV services at health service delivery points in Mauritania.
- Strengthening EMoNC networks through advocacy, capacity building, infrastructure support, and data monitoring in Burkina Faso and Republic of the Congo.
- Scaling up SRH and GBV services in humanitarian settings in Burkina Faso.
- Setting up mobile clinics in hard-to-reach locations in Niger and Mauritania.
- Improvements in last-mile distribution of modern contraceptives in Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso.
- Deploying Community-Based Depot Agents (CBDAs) and midwives nationwide in Mali.

- Increasing numbers of One Stop Centres, girl's clubs, husbands and future husbands schools in several countries.
- Advocacy for inclusion of obstetric fistula in Universal Health Coverage in Cote d'Ivoire; as well as
- Digitalizing monitoring and evaluation towards improving service delivery in Niger.

In a few countries, there were no scale up activities implemented, as CPDs were recently approved or due to personnel gaps, lack of existing universal health coverage mechanisms, funding gaps and challenging political dynamics.

Finding 25: Scaling up these services is primarily enabled by systems strengthening endeavours, including strategy and guidelines development, service quality improvement, and health worker training, as well as the integration of key strategies and innovations into broader health systems.

125. There are limits to the scope and scale of UNFPA's service delivery⁵⁰ efforts per its smaller funding size in comparison to similar agencies with related mandates. Strengthening health and other social systems and integrating key initiatives into broader health systems is now viewed as the best approach to achieve scale up. These include systems strengthening⁵¹ activities that cut across strategy and guidelines development, service quality improvement, health worker training and integration of services. Some examples include:

- Development of guidelines, policies, SOPs, and training of healthcare workers; Implementation of maternal death surveillance and response in Sierra Leone.
- Strengthening the national health system to provide high quality integrated SRH and FP services as part of the national Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) strategy in Sierra Leone.
- Inclusion of program interventions into the government's social safety net program in Cote d'Ivoire.
- Capacity-building for the national health system (staff training, equipping health centres, providing drugs and reagents, etc.) in Niger.
- Diversifying the skills of midwives by strengthening their capacity to deliver post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for GBV survivors in addition to other FP and MNH services) in Mali.
- UNFPA's collaboration with the Gambia Diaspora Expert Initiative to provide telemedicine support, providing technical guidance, and capacity building to service providers in hard-to-reach communities.
- Strengthening midwifery education through curriculum development, regulatory support, association building, advocacy, capacity building, and mentorship programs across the region.
- Strengthening and implementation of maternal death surveillance and response through capacity building for health workers across the region.

⁵⁰ The RPE team defines service delivery as any activity that improves outcomes primarily by increasing inputs such as commodity provision, health/social worker deployment etc. Systems strengthening is accomplished by more comprehensive changes to performance drivers such as policies and regulations, organizational structures, and relationships across the health/education or social system to motivate changes in behavior and/or allow more effective use of resources to improve multiple services.

⁵¹ The RPE team defines service delivery as any activity that improves outcomes primarily by increasing inputs such as commodity provision, health/social worker deployment etc. Systems strengthening is accomplished by more comprehensive changes to performance drivers such as policies and regulations, organizational structures, and relationships across the health/education or social system to motivate changes in behavior and/or allow more effective use of resources to improve multiple services.

Finding 26: Partnerships also play a critical role in scaling up human rights focused comprehensive SRH information and services and multi-sectoral response to GBV, especially implementation partnerships with Country Governments, other UN agencies and Civil Society.

126. There is consensus about the critical role of partnerships in scaling up human rights-focused comprehensive SRH information and services and a multi-sectoral response to GBV. There are different dimensions of partnership, including strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender, and other UN agencies especially WHO on the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Health System Strengthening (HSS) agendas, and UNICEF and UN WOMEN on the multi-sectoral GBV response. There is however a need to develop and or strengthen high-level partnerships with these organizations at both regional and country levels, with a goal to improve UNFPA’s positioning and influence in decision making processes with these organizations. In addition, there is also an opportunity to optimize partnerships with civil society, through building large coalitions of CSOs including youth and women organizations. Lastly, country offices have also introduced new specialized IPs with expertise to reach specific vulnerable groups or work in hard-to-reach locations, which also contributes to the LNOB accelerator, but also to this strategic shift. Partnerships as an accelerator has already been discussed in extensive detail, and is therefore not elaborated further here.

Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role

Q 1.8 To what extent has WCARO played and supported a stronger normative role for UNFPA in the region?

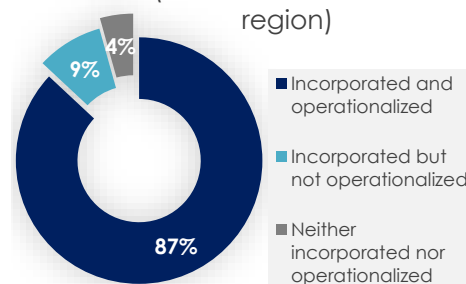


Finding 27: Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role is largely viewed as one of UNFPA’s ways of working or in some cases a CPD output, not a strategic shift, with similar approaches implemented as in previous strategic plans. It is however recognised as critical to UNFPA’s mandate.

127. Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role is critical, as UNFPA’s mandate includes several politically charged issues e.g. Gender and Social Norms, GBV, LGBTQI+. This strategic shift plays an important role in addressing the underlying causes of key issues within UNFPA’s mandate. These areas require significant advocacy work, influencing policy and legal frameworks. 96% countries find this shift relevant (48% highly relevant, 26% relevant and 22% find it somewhat relevant). 87% of countries have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator.

This shift is well incorporated in their CPD as a dedicated output or activities within outputs that aim to shape strategies, policies and laws, utilizing advocacy, policy dialogue, accountability mechanisms, coordination groups and evidence generation initiatives. This includes UNFPA’s role in monitoring international law and treaties, and engagement with

Fig 18. Operationalization of strengthening UNFPA’s normative role
(% of countries in the region)



human rights instruments at global, regional and local levels, towards holding governments and other stakeholders accountable.

Finding 28: Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role is becoming increasingly important with shrinking ODA, stronger leadership by country governments and rapidly changing political contexts. There is also a perception that UNFPA’s normative role is being interpreted too narrowly, with an inadequate policy implementation focus.

128. Shrinking ODA globally and a challenging fund-raising climate in the region indicates a need to optimize smaller funding pots. One suggestion towards optimization is for UNFPA to strengthen its efforts towards shaping national policy, strategy and influencing domestic funding allocations, along-side the current more limited-service delivery⁵² coverage/results. The funding decline is also affecting feminist and youth organizations, presenting an opportunity for UNFPA to build their capacity in advocacy and fundraising, and to better utilize UNFPA’s convening power; bringing diverse stakeholders together as part of its advocacy efforts. In addition, there is stronger Government leadership and ownership of programs (especially MoH and MoF), which indicates a need for more significant peer-engagement approaches as compared to previous top-down approaches, towards ensuring evidence-based policy decisions. Further, the rapidly changing political context in the region with several political transitions to military governments calls for increasing advocacy efforts and adaptation of approaches as needed.

129. There is also a perception among UNFPA personnel that UNFPA’s normative role is being interpreted too narrowly in programs, with a focus on influencing policy and legal frameworks, and less attention on implementation of these policies and laws. Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role is described as leading coordination groups and close relationships with key government ministries and departments towards influencing national policies and programs. This includes both shaping policy development and subsequent implementation support, with more examples of policy development than implementation. Some countries are implementing both aspects, e.g. Equatorial Guinea has a comprehensive approach that ensures actively pursuing concrete actions towards implementation. Sierra Leone is influencing policies, relevant laws, and accountability frameworks, with effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these policies (e.g. a National Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment policy, Male Involvement Strategy for GBV prevention). Others are implementing policy development support but have challenges with implementation e.g. Cote d’Ivoire has an active advocacy and policy work, but notes limitations in translating policy change to implementation, indicating that some changes are not fully applied. Nigeria is implementing activities fulfilling UNFPA’s normative role, but notes inadequate funding to address major challenges that are the subject of advocacy efforts. A major achievement that demonstrates influencing policy implementation, was the multi-year COMPACT agreements signed by country Governments towards creating a budget line for RH commodities procurement, with many of these countries already fulfilling their commitments. This is discussed in more detail under the F2FF agenda section.

⁵² The RPE team defines service delivery as any activity that improves outcomes primarily by increasing inputs such as commodity provision, health/social worker deployment etc. Systems strengthening is accomplished by more comprehensive changes to performance drivers such as policies and regulations, organizational structures, and relationships across the health/education or social system to motivate changes in behavior and/or allow more effective use of resources to improve multiple services.

Finding 29: Technical capacity and financial resources towards implementing UNFPA’s normative role are perceived to be limited, with an emphasis on policy advocacy skills and prioritizing funding for normative work as compared to service delivery. WCARO’s support is lower here compared to other strategic shifts.

130. Policy advocacy capacity is the most important skill set required to effectively fulfil UNFPA’s normative role, and it is limited in this region, with the majority of UNFPA’s personnel coming from public health, supply chain, demography, and similar backgrounds. Further, there is a need for adaptive capacities to better navigate the changing political landscapes, per the dynamic government situations in WCA, requiring increased advocacy work. Closely related and complementary to this is also more limited social norms expertise as discussed earlier in the section on addressing discriminatory social and gender norms. There have however been concrete efforts to address this capacity gap; primarily through leadership changes at regional and country levels linked to realignment processes towards implementing the current strategic plan. In addition, there have also been capacity building efforts geared towards CSOs to strengthen SRHR advocacy efforts. Strengthening partnerships and evidence generation are important enablers here, through leveraging the technical expertise of others e.g. joint advocacy efforts; and evidence generation to better inform advocacy. Just over half (57%) of countries are receiving some support (39%) or significant support (18%) from the regional office towards implementing this strategic shift.

131. The other major gap was the de-prioritization of UNFPA’s Normative work in funding decisions. Funding mechanisms incentivize quick results in service delivery⁵³ rather than normative work. However, the results of normative work are perceived to be more impactful, and less expensive.

Shifting focus from funding to funding and financing the ICPD agenda in the region

Q 1.9 To what extent has the Regional Program embraced the shift from funding to funding and financing (F2FF) agenda to accelerate progress towards the three transformative results?



Finding 30: The F2FF approach at UNFPA WCARO is still being finetuned, with new activities gradually being rolled out across the region. As a result, there is still some ambiguity and differing interpretations of the accelerator/shift, with some resistance to the agenda. However, there is wide acknowledgment that this has the potential to be a “true” accelerator.

132. The current approach to the F2FF agenda, is using analytics and building strategic partnerships to optimize the use of government budgets to design and implement services. This often involves evidence-based advocacy for increased budgetary allocations from government or leveraging strategic funding partnerships with IFIs, other UN agencies, and the private sector, amongst others. There are however, differing interpretations of F2FF, ideas on how it should be implemented and levels of organizational leadership support for this

⁵³ The RPE team defines service delivery as any activity that improves outcomes primarily by increasing inputs such as commodity provision, health/social worker deployment etc. Systems strengthening is accomplished by more comprehensive changes to performance drivers such as policies and regulations, organizational structures, and relationships across the health/education or social system to motivate changes in behavior and/or allow more effective use of resources to improve multiple services.

initiative. The predominant definitions are diversifying UNFPA's funding sources as well as strategically engaging with governments to increase domestic funding towards the 3TRs. Irrespective of the preferred definition, there is consensus on the role of F2FF as a true accelerator, with the potential to influence all areas of UNFPA's work, accelerate progress towards the 3TRs, and also contribute to sustainability if effectively implemented. 79% of countries find this accelerator highly relevant (48%) or relevant (31%). The proportion of countries that found this accelerator highly relevant was however lower than all other accelerators except UNFPA's normative role with the same proportion. This statistic and other qualitative feedback reveal some push back on the approach, that linked to the clarity issues from HQ level, for instance, the revision of initial drafts of a stronger public financing approach from 4 CPDs in the past year, to less comprehensive approaches. Experts in the region are now working on setting up a few countries as "champions" in order to use them as business cases.

Finding 31: The technical capacity and current strategic positioning of UNFPA country offices, preclude engagement in financing, with very few personnel across the organization with the relevant skillset; and UNFPA not traditionally involved in financing discussions/working groups.

133. There is low capacity on this subject in the WCA region, and UNFPA as a whole, with very few economists in the organization. Also, existing staff are predominantly focused on social policies rather than financing strategies, further exacerbating the capability gap. This results in a low level of understanding of finance in the organization, and creates missed opportunities to leverage existing relationships with relevant stakeholders. In addition, UNFPA has not historically been involved in financing, and most country offices are not strategically positioned to implement F2FF. UNFPA personnel are often not involved in forums with finance stakeholders or part of related working groups/committees and are hardly involved in financing discussions. There is a need for COs to understand the fiscal space and budgeting processes, as this will enable them to better navigate financing discussions, and contribute to policy advocacy efforts within UNFPA's normative role.

134. The regional office has however hired a technical specialist (Social Policy and Health Economics Advisor) to spearhead F2FF efforts. The specialist is already influencing improvements, with several workshops and technical assistance activities already underway, e.g. a recent series of smart advocacy workshops. More than half (57%) of countries are already receiving some support (44%) or significant support (13%) from the regional office towards implementing this strategic shift. A lower proportion compared to other accelerators, except integrating the effects of megatrends.

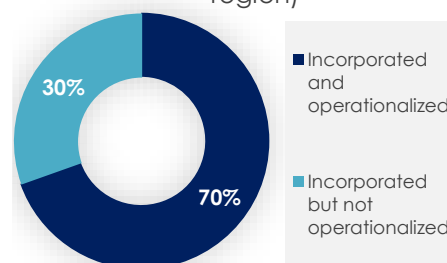
135. There are resource constraints here as well, primarily the lack of dedicated funding or personnel for F2FF initiatives at country level and modest technical support from the regional office. This necessitates enhancing the competencies of non-specialist personnel at the country level to effectively implement key F2FF initiatives, including advocacy for increased domestic budget allocations, in addition to other roles they play in the organization. These personnel often have limited availability. In addition, experts describe engaging international financial institutions (IFIs) as arduous, requiring lengthy and complex negotiations that may span several years without guaranteed outcomes. This also suggests the need for significant and sustained human resources. Financing experts also suggest a mindset change is needed

among country leaders (Representatives and Deputy Representatives) towards becoming more proactive and skilled to confidently engage in financing conversations, as this is a core part of their role. Experts also recommend implementing a public financing training program, initially adapted from Asia, through workshops and virtual courses. These sessions will enhance COs' understanding of public financing and increase their capacity to engage with national budget processes.

Finding 32: The level of operationalization of this accelerator is lower and varies more across countries. However, the signing of the COMPACT agreements in several countries stands out as the most significant achievement. There is now a need for further advocacy to create budget lines and ensure disbursement. There are also several other budding interventions and successes in countries.

136. There is increased engagement with F2FF initiatives, with 70% of countries have incorporated and are implementing this accelerator, while the rest have only incorporated this accelerator in their country plans, with plans underway to commence implementation. In addition to the start-up inertia for countries with recently approved CPDs, there are also varied levels of adoption and responsiveness of countries to implementing these initiatives, with better-resourced countries such as Ghana and Nigeria embracing these initiatives quicker.

Fig 19. Operationalization of F2FF agenda
(% of countries in the region)



137. The main success story of implementing the F2FF agenda is the remarkable progress in the signing of the COMPACT agreement in the past year, with a sizeable number of countries in the region achieving their minimum contribution requirement for FP supplies, and budget lines created for the procurement of RH commodities. Beyond fulfilling the financial targets, the intent of COMPACT is to build national capacity and systems towards sustainability. Most countries referred to the COMPACT agreement as their main F2FF achievement. In comparison, it took almost a decade in Latin America to achieve similar results. Further advocacy is required to ensure budget lines are created and funds are disbursed in the remaining countries, and this is being implemented via the SMART Advocacy initiative with workshops already done in 13 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Togo, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Benin, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Ghana, and the Republic of Congo). Another key activity in countries, is working on supporting governments to develop investment cases for each of the 3TRs per Executive Board recommendations. There are however concerns that the implementation of these investment cases in countries will require some investment. There is however a need for a mindset shift in the organization around F2FF, recognizing that this is more of a political issue than it is an economic one. Securing and maintaining political will is critical, despite constrained resources.

138. Regional and country-level successes and ongoing initiatives include:

- Advocating for Senegal's integration into the SWEDD project (structured around transformative results) in 2022 through a World Bank credit to the State of Senegal.
- The creation of a budget line for the surgical treatment of obstetric fistulas in Senegal.
- The incorporation of FP in the National Health Insurance Scheme in Ghana.

- The 2021-2024 Kobikisa project in Congo Brazzaville has seen significant government investment to improve maternal and child health services.
- National dialogues on domestic financing for FP and GBV services, along with increased allocations for the Domestic Violence Secretariat and local government shelters for GBV victims in Ghana.

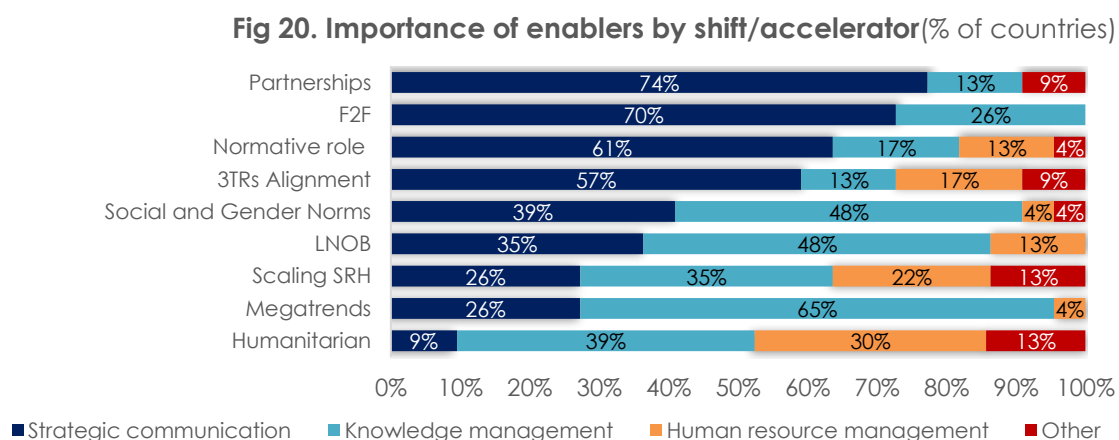
Finding 33: Contextual differences across countries also define the operationalization of the F2FF agenda, with countries adapting their approaches to their unique realities.

139. Countries have unique challenges in implementing F2FF e.g. Equatorial Guinea is unable to engage the main private sector actors in the country (Oil and Gas sector) per UNFPA’s policy on partnering with Extractive industries. This challenge is faced by several other countries in the region. It is however more challenging in Equatorial Guinea, where the fiscal space is tighter, due to the absence of traditional donors and limited alternative funding opportunities. In Nigeria, key drivers required to operationalize F2FF in a large and complex country are missing, and the financial needs far outweigh the domestic RM capacities (fiscal space), as a result, the country continues to focus on mobilizing traditional bilateral partners, and is currently expanding its RM efforts to IFIs as well as multilateral partners (EU) through UN joints programs. In Ghana, the classification as a Lower Middle-Income Country has changed donors’ focus from health to other areas such as trade and investments, this further exacerbates the global ODA decline, in addition to other economic crises the country is facing. The CO is increasingly looking to the private sector for domestic RM.

4.2 The role of enablers in supporting operationalization of shifts and accelerators

Evaluation Question 2: What are the enablers to operationalizing the shifts, and to what extent have they facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program?

140. The main enablers explored through the RPE, as identified through document reviews and early stakeholder consultations were strategic communication, human resource strategies, and knowledge management. These enablers are not adequately utilized, with lower utilization levels linked to human resource capacity gaps.



Finding 34: Strategic communication is well recognized as an enabler; however, it is underutilized, with capacity gaps to effectively implement it in the region.

141. Strategic communication is well recognized as an enabler, especially towards strengthening partnerships, implementing the F2FF agenda, strengthening UNFPA's normative role, and the 3TRs alignment. However, it is underutilized, with capacity gaps to effectively implement it. There have been recent improvements in utilization since the recruitment of the new adviser; with regional capacity-building events and external stakeholder engagements, but opportunities exist to better utilize this enabler, with suggestions of increased evidence-based, contextually adapted, and targeted communication to a more diverse set of stakeholders.

Finding 35: The complement of human resources (skill sets and expertise levels) in the regional and country offices at the start of the current Regional Program was misaligned with the requirement of the new plan. This was effectively addressed through a realignment process.

142. The main human resource management strategy deployed towards acceleration was the realignment at WCARO, necessitated by a misalignment in the complement of human resources (skill sets and expertise levels) and the requirement of the new Regional Program. This has resulted in the curation of a highly skilled team of staff, with a new organigram that creates linkages across units, thereby preventing the previous siloed ways of working. A significant number of positions were created and staffed according to the needs identified, resulting in more than half of the regional office personnel being replaced, and changes to senior management teams in country offices (Representatives, Deputy Representatives, and International Operations Managers). These highly skilled regional office teams are expected to improve technical support, working with new country office leadership to enable effective program design and implementation in country offices towards addressing the 3TRs and accelerating progress. The country survey indicated that human resource management is a more important enabler for expanding humanitarian response capacity (decentralization of response to sub-national level offices), and scaling SRH and a multi-sectoral GBV response. It is however too early to assess how well these new teams and structures will facilitate acceleration.

Finding 36: The regional office implements some centrally-led knowledge management initiatives. However, systems are not standardized, with several project-driven initiatives.

143. Knowledge management (KM) is also an underutilized enabler with many project or unit-driven initiatives and good practices at regional/country level, and inadequate central coordination of these initiatives and no SOP. This has resulted in some parallel systems, bottlenecks in knowledge transfer, and inefficiencies across some organizational processes. The country survey indicates that KM is a more important enabler for Integrating the effects of megatrends, Increasing the focus on LNOB, Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, and Expanding the humanitarian response capacity. There are clear linkages between project-specific KM systems and acceleration e.g. the SWEDD project's scale-up in the Sahel region partly attributed to its strong KM system, among other factors. The new KM specialist is now rolling out several new initiatives including a KM platform to be launched at the end of 2024, which presents an opportunity to centralize KM initiatives and promote knowledge sharing in the region. The platform will include dedicated learning pages to consolidate unit- and project-based KM initiatives (silos), contributing to a more region-wide and organization-wide knowledge base and fostering a more effective and efficient organization. This will also

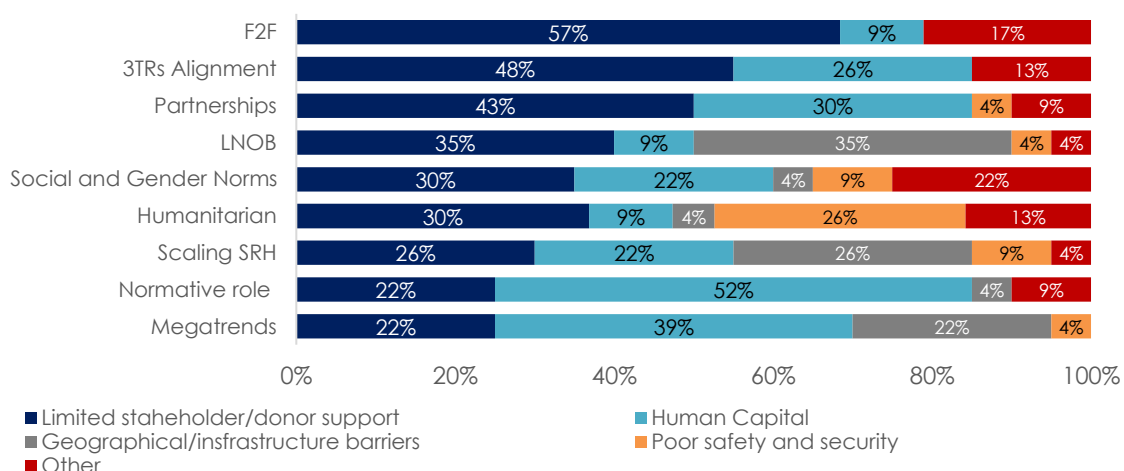
include interventions to address change resistance through extensive engagement with staff, as this is important for transitioning from a siloed/unit-based KM initiatives to an organization-wide approach.

4.3 The role of barriers in inhibiting operationalization of shifts and accelerators

Evaluation Question 3: What are the inhibiting factors, and to what extent have they limited the acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program ?

144. The main barriers explored through the RPE, as identified through document reviews and early stakeholder consultations were: limited stakeholder/donor commitment, Inadequate human capital, geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure, and poor safety and security. An additional barrier: operational inefficiencies, was identified during data collection.

Fig. 21. Barriers affecting shifts/accelerators (% of countries)



Finding 37: Limited stakeholder/donor commitment is viewed as an important barrier for with recent political, economic and humanitarian context changes in the region.

145. Limited stakeholder commitment and declining donor support largely impacts acceleration in the region, in addition to several contextual challenges that have resulted in further decline, ranging from donor fatigue/mistrust, to competing crises, politicized funding, MICs deprioritised for donor funding, and private sector donor restrictions. There is increasing resistance from country governments with a real pushback related to some of UNFPA’s areas of focus such as FP and women’s rights, FGM and LGBTQI+ related work. Countries in this region identify this as a barrier that affects all accelerators, but was indicated by more countries as a barrier to the F2FF agenda, 3TRs alignment, strengthening partnerships, and leaving no one behind.

Finding 38: There are still personnel gaps in the region, particularly at country level, with many accelerators/shifts implemented through focal points who are not specialised in the respective technical area, and some language barriers between regional and country personnel.

146. Human capital is another important barrier to acceleration with personnel gaps in the region, particularly at country level, and many accelerators implemented through focal points who are not specialised in the respective technical area, sometimes in addition to their primary role. There are human resource gaps in strategic communication, advocacy, resource mobilization, social norms, F2FF and humanitarian preparedness and response. There are also

limited language skills among some regional office personnel: a barrier to providing effective support to country offices, as well as limited availability of service delivery personnel, and challenges with their adaptability and flexibility in changing implementation contexts in the WCA region is a barrier to acceleration. Human capital was also identified as a barrier to the following accelerators: Integrating the effects of megatrends, such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities, and digitalization, into programming, Strengthening UNFPA's normative role, and strengthening partnerships.

Finding 39: Increasing insecurity in the region is impacting program implementation, and safety and security teams capacity and resources in the region are insufficient.

147. Safety and security challenges are on the rise in the region, with immediate impacts on program implementation including increasing funding needs to prevent inefficiencies and incidents. This is also compounded by the capacity of safety and security teams; described as insufficient, and unable to effectively support countries with significant crises, without increased resources.

Finding 40: Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure increase the cost implementation, with service delivery adaptations deployed to reach cut-off populations with services.

148. Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure are largely viewed as a barrier to accelerator that deal with coverage of services or reaching specific population types. This barrier affects the following accelerators/shifts, per country survey reports: LNOB, Scaling up the provision of high-quality comprehensive SRH information and services, and Integrating the effects of megatrends, such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities, and digitalization, into programming. The impact of this barrier is described as complex, reducing access to services for populations and increasing the cost of implementation due to service delivery adaptations deployed to address the barrier.

Finding 41: Operational inefficiencies, accountability issues and spending capacity affect budget execution, and make it difficult to achieve results to attract more funding.

149. Lastly, the RPE also uncovered an additional barrier to operationalizing accelerators: operational inefficiencies, which lead to accountability issues and affect spending capacity/budget execution. These make it difficult to achieve results, and further impact opportunities to attract more funding from the same donors where underspending was reported.

4.4 A Forward-Looking Perspective

4.1 To what extent and how should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program to stay relevant, keep its essence and enhance its impact orientation given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region, as well as internal and external challenges and opportunities?

4.2 How ready is the organization to face future challenges and changes, and fulfil its normative role, particularly in the context of increasingly complex political and social contexts?

150. The findings in this section have been merged with the RPE recommendations due to the extensive overlap noted between the findings here and the recommendations. Detailed findings are however still included in [Annex 5](#) for reference purposes.

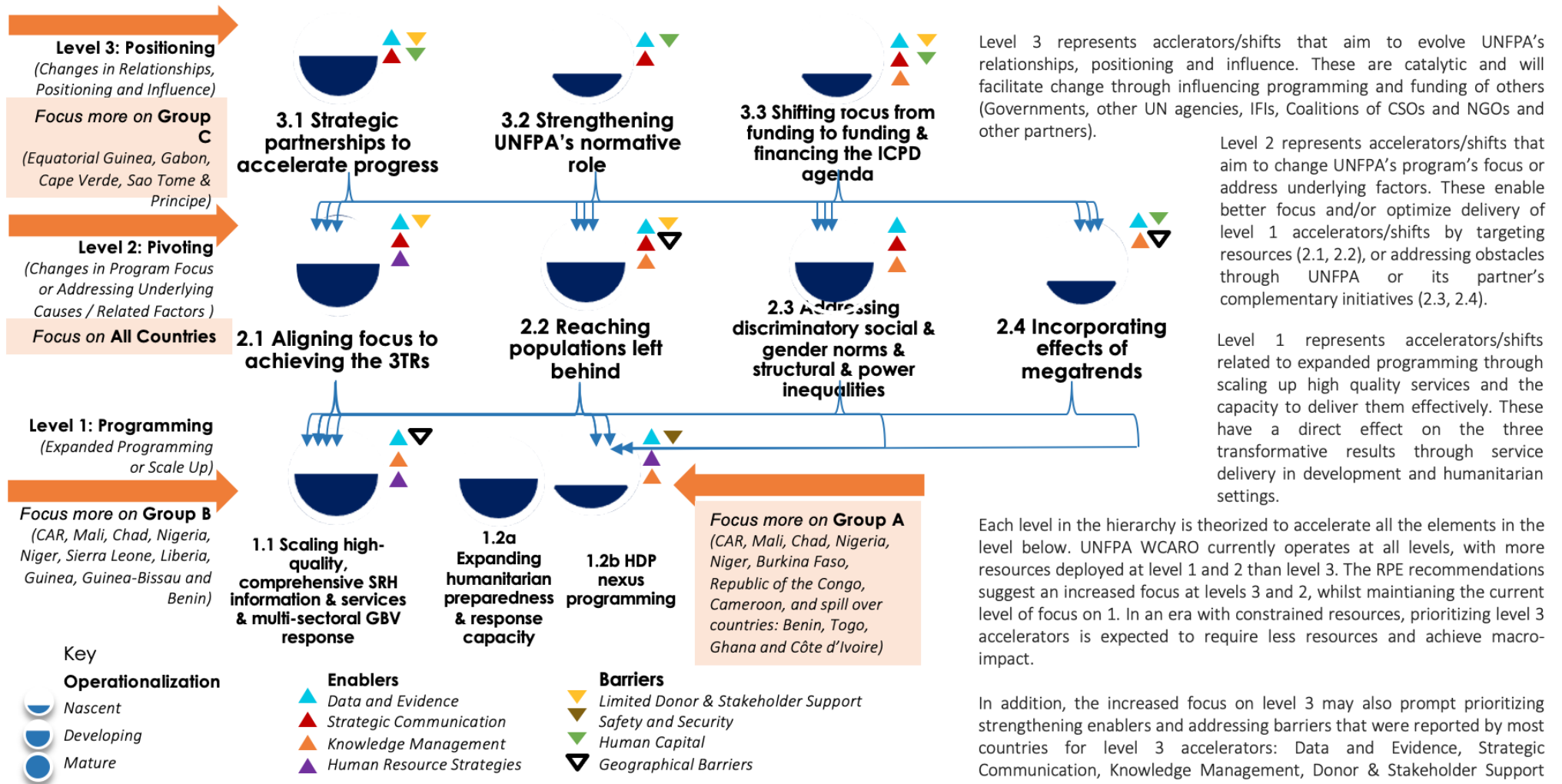
151. The RPE also presents the graphic below that proposes a prioritization of certain accelerators, enablers and barriers for UNFPA WCARO's future investments, based on analysis of RPE findings. The suggestions here are mirrored in the recommendations section as well.

Fig 22. Accelerators Hierarchy



Accelerators: hierarchy, operationalization, enablers and barriers

This graphic depicts a hierarchy among accelerators/strategic shifts assessed in the RPE, their levels of operationalization, as well as enablers and barriers



5. Conclusions

152. The conclusions presented here are based on analyses of crosscutting themes across evaluation findings. They cover relevance, operationalization and the future outlook of strategic shifts, WCARO's positioning and partnerships and implementation capacity in the region.

Conclusion 1: The introduction of accelerators and strategic shifts in the 2022-2025 Regional Program /CPDs is very relevant in the WCA region, and accelerators/strategic shifts have largely been defined and contextualized, with operationalization well underway. However, the levels of operationalization vary by accelerator, and some require clearer organizational guidance.

153. All strategic shifts were found to be relevant and urgently needed in WCA, with the region lagging behind on all 3TRs compared to other regions. Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, reaching those furthest behind first, and expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity are the most relevant accelerators in the region's context, as they are directly linked to underlying causes limiting progress towards the 3TRs. The humanitarian capacity development accelerator is becoming increasingly important with recent crises in the region. Partnerships and the F2FF agenda are also highlighted as increasingly important due to the global decline in donor funding, and historically lower funding levels in the region, against a backdrop of increasing needs.

154. Strategic shifts have also been better defined and contextualized through the recent (2024) production of a set of acceleration papers by WCARO and some country representatives. The papers are yet to be widely disseminated in the region. However, the F2FF approach is still being finetuned, with some ambiguity and differing interpretations of the accelerator/shift across the organization. Countries have largely incorporated these accelerators and shifts into their current CPDs, but some plans were only recently approved, and others were only just being rolled out at the time of this RPE.

155. The strategic shifts already being operationalized, mostly relate to ongoing areas of work that have existed in previous strategic plans, with COs having sufficient pre-existing capacity to implement these, such as scaling up SRH and a multisectoral GBV response, and addressing discriminatory social and gender norms. Other accelerators/shifts such as F2FF have required the introduction of new personnel and capacity, so exhibit slower progress. The region is however experiencing some early successes in operationalizing some accelerators. The 3TRs alignment accelerator, has played a key role in defining priorities and strategic direction, as well as aligning resources at country, and regional level. The LNOB accelerator has also enabled country offices to reach populations where its interventions are most impactful, prioritizing key beneficiary groups, utilizing specialized implementing partners and optimizing limited resources. The least operationalized accelerator is integrating the effects of megatrends; a missed opportunity as it has the potential to reinforce the "One UN" approach, and is a pathway to achieving the ICPD PoA, the 6 transitions and sustainable development as a whole.

Conclusion 2: UNFPA's current role in service delivery is yielding lower impact due to declining funding levels and increasing insecurity in the region. Gaps in donor commitment and

stakeholder support suggest an urgent need to examine UNFPA’s positioning and role. The current political, economic and humanitarian landscape presents an opportunity for UNFPA to play a stronger normative role, with policy advocacy work becoming even more relevant, as well as leveraging other UN agencies with stronger operational capacity, through joint programming and advocacy to maximize impact.

156. The region is experiencing declining donor support and stakeholder commitment, which affects the delivery of the Regional Program and acceleration in the region. The decline is linked to several factors, ranging from donor fatigue/mistrust, to competing crises, politicised funding, Middle Income countries (MICs) deprioritised for donor funding, resistance from country governments related to some of UNFPA’s areas of focus, and internal private sector donor restrictions.

157. UNFPA’s current service delivery reach is much smaller than comparator agencies such as UNICEF, with arguably less impact expected from maintaining its smaller portfolio of service delivery work, with increasing resource constraints. Repositioning the organization in a way that it leans heavily on its more strategic technical assistance role, than its service delivery role seems to be the logical transition. UNFPA’s ongoing normative work is already influencing policies, with a network of high-level stakeholders already established. In combination with new F2FF initiatives, these efforts can influence both government budgets and implementation towards macro-impact. In addition, an increase in joint programs at global, regional or country levels with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP and other UN agencies, can be leveraged to incorporate UNFPA’s priorities in these projects and conduct joint service delivery and advocacy, leveraging the stronger and larger operational capacity and geographical reach of these agencies.

Conclusion 3: The core barrier to implementation in the region can be summed up in one word “capacity.” This entails both the quantity and quality of human resource, and to some extent the systems in place for program delivery. All accelerators, enablers and barriers examined, and their utilization or impact largely reflect capacity gaps. The recent HR realignment of the in the region has begun to address this gap, alongside several capacity building activities and expected systems improvements led by the new specialists.

158. The realignment of the regional office, and ongoing realignment at country level are expected to improve capacity in the region. The regional team now comprises staff with the required skill sets, organized with a new organigram that creates linkages across units, thereby preventing the previous siloed ways of working. This realignment strategy is enabling a match between the Regional Program/CPD expectations and the implementation teams. It is however early to assess how well these new teams will facilitate acceleration.

159. There are however still personnel gaps at country level that will not be addressed through realignment, where certain specialized roles are implemented through focal points that are not specialized in the respective technical area, sometimes in addition to their primary role. These include strategic communication, knowledge management, advocacy, resource mobilization, social norms, F2FF, humanitarian preparedness and response, safety and security and different megatrends. This explains the underutilization of these enablers and accelerators. There is also a need for value clarification for staff to increase their confidence working in the human rights space.

160. In addition to personnel gaps, there are also program delivery and operational system gaps. These range from strategic communication not adequately tailored to the targeted stakeholder-base, absence of a KM SOP with limited central coordination, operational inefficiencies related to budget execution, better program design and quality processes, and gaps in technical assistance delivery to country offices.

Conclusion 4: Optimizing several accelerators and strategic shifts requires improved analysis and utilization of evidence. This ranges from better integrating population and data activities to the 3TRs, to a need for stronger analysis on intersectionality to strengthen the LNOB agenda, filling gaps in evidence on the linkages across megatrends, financing, and strategic communication, amongst others.

161. Several strategic shifts and enablers require improvements in data analysis and or utilization to improve their operationalization. These include strengthening integrating of population and data activities into 3TRs programming; developing results matrices that cover LNOB implementation, further disaggregation of analysis to capture intersectionality for more effective targeting; as well as evidence on the effectiveness of social and gender norms change initiatives to improve programming. There is also a need for further research on megatrends to better understand the effects of megatrends on the 3TRs, linkages across megatrends, migration trends, and to understand the evolving demographic landscape and its implications. Lastly, there are gaps in understanding the fiscal space (financial data and budgeting processes) to better navigate financing discussions and contribute to advocacy efforts within UNFPA's normative role.

Conclusion 5: The primary considerations for conceptualizing the next Regional Program, should include the state of progress towards the 3TRs in the region, the opportunity to optimize the accelerators with increasing capacity in the region, as well as responding to recent contextual changes. In this region, the unfinished business envisaged for the next strategic plan is significant.

162. In reconceptualizing the next Regional Program, one of the core considerations is the state of progress towards the 3TRs in the region, with majority of countries in the region unlikely to achieve the 3TRs in the current period. The outstanding work in this region to be achieved through the next Regional Program is significant, if the 3TR targets are not adjusted downwards. Accelerators are relevant and contextualised, and with increasing capacity in the region through realignments, the next Regional Program should be focused on fully optimizing the accelerators, especially prioritising level 3 accelerators (*See Fig 22*) such as UNFPA's normative role, partnerships, and the F2FF agenda, that have the potential to achieve macro-impact in the current resource constrained context.

163. Recent contextual changes especially increasing humanitarian crises and increasing pushbacks against women's rights suggest a need to further strengthen UNFPA's normative role, scale up investments in reaching populations left behind, including through humanitarian and complementary economic empowerment programming, further enabling access to services for these populations.

6. Recommendations

164. The recommendations⁵⁴ below are tailored to the five conclusions, with a focus on those that will likely inform the design of the next Regional Program. Under each recommendation, the corresponding conclusions, findings and responsible parties are indicated. Further, countries in the region have been grouped into categories (See Table 6 below) to enable prioritization of suggested actions under recommendations, which suggests a review of UNFPA’s role in different country contexts and how WCARO facilitates this. Some countries are not represented in the table below as they do not meet any of the prioritization criteria. Suggested actions under recommendations have been tagged with the applicable country categories, and all untagged actions are recommended for all countries. The categories include:

- A. Protracted/acute humanitarian contexts, and countries experiencing spill over from neighbouring humanitarian contexts.
- B. Countries lagging furthest behind on all 3TRs. These appear as top 10, in four or five results areas⁵⁵ under the 3TRs, and Countries lagging furthest behind in one of the five result areas.
- C. Countries that are classified as SIDS or Small Business Units or have relatively larger GDP/capita.

Table 6: Country categorization for prioritization of recommendations⁵⁶

Group A	Group B		Group C
Humanitarian context (protracted/acute) & spill over countries	Lagging furthest behind on all 3TRs ⁵⁷	Lagging furthest behind on 1 TR ⁵⁸	SIDS/Small Business Units/ Higher GDP per capita
CAR	CAR	Benin (Unmet FP)	Equatorial Guinea
Mali*	Mali*	Guinea (FGM)	Gabon
Chad*	Chad*	Chad* (MMR)	Cape Verde
Nigeria	Liberia	Nigeria (MMR)	Sao Tome & Principe
Niger*	Guinea Bissau	Niger* (CM)	
Burkina Faso *	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone (GBV)	
Republic of the Congo			
Cameroon			
Côte d’Ivoire+			
Benin+			
Ghana+			
Togo+			

*Multifactor countries: countries with relatively large populations, high TFRs, lower GDP/capita and are run by military governments.
+Humanitarian crises spill over countries

⁵⁴ Note: Although high-level recommendations addressing these two accelerators (Addressing discriminatory Gender and Social Norms, and Expanding Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Capacity) are already presented above. The deep dive reports also provide more granular recommendations for these. See [Annex 2](#) and [3](#).

⁵⁵ MMR, Unmet FP need, GBV, CM and FGM

⁵⁶ Three countries are not represented in the table above (The Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal) as they are not the furthest behind on any result area, are not classified as humanitarian contexts and are not SIDS or Small Business Units. All general recommendations are applicable to these countries.

⁵⁷ In the top 10, of poorest results across all 3TRs

⁵⁸ Country with the poorest result in one result area

Recommendations	Suggested actions	Priority level	Lead unit/role	Other units involved
1. Amplify UNFPA’s strategic technical assistance role, in a bid to better navigate the rapidly evolving socio-political context in the region, with increased focus on policy implementation. <i>Links to conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 5 Links to findings: 1, 2, 26, 27, 28, 29</i>	1.1 Amplify UNFPA’s normative work in the next Regional Programme, CPDs and upcoming funding decisions, especially in MICs and small business unit countries; towards skewing their portfolio of work to a more strategic role.	High	WCARO Leadership (Regional Director & Deputy)	Technical Units, PCU, CO Leadership (Representatives & Deputies)
	1.2 Strengthen capacity of all countries in the region to implement policy advocacy work, with increased focus on supporting and monitoring policy implementation.	High	WCARO Leadership	Technical Units, PCU, CO Leadership
2. Maintain the current service delivery portfolio, with a focus on high-impact interventions for populations left behind (especially humanitarian contexts), towards optimizing constrained resources, and responding to contextual changes in the region. <i>Links to conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 5 Links to findings: 1, 2, 4, 15, 18, 25, 40</i>	2.1 Sustain resource mobilization efforts with a focus on the 3TRs, through regional programs and by providing support to country offices to maintain or expand funding for service delivery (especially in humanitarian contexts). Prioritize countries facing the greatest challenges in achieving the 3TRs.	High	WCARO Leadership	Resource Mobilization & Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Technical Units
	2.2 Prioritize the LNOB approach for service delivery (including in humanitarian contexts). Focus on providing technical support to increase targeted high-quality program interventions for populations left behind, with systematic selection of context-appropriate, evidence-based interventions, and clear theories of change. This recommendation is for all countries per each country’s LNOB focus areas.	Medium	Program Coordination Unit (PCU)	Humanitarian Unit, Technical Units, CO Leadership
	2.3 Improve regional guidance on the HDP nexus approach, with technical support for operationalization in Group A countries. This should clearly elaborate the peace pillar.	Medium	Humanitarian Unit	PCU, Gender and Human Rights Unit
3. Leverage existing partnerships and foster new ones to scale up interventions, especially joint programs, and partnerships that systematically address the effects of megatrends. <i>Links to conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 5 </i>	3.1. Scale up joint programs at regional level and support countries to scale up similar partnerships with UNICEF, UNHCR, UNWOMEN, UNDP, WFP, IOM, and other agencies, to leverage their stronger operational capacity, and areas of expertise, including but not limited to addressing discriminatory social norms, humanitarian response, integrating the effects of megatrends (climate change, peace and security and food security), and economic empowerment.	High	WCARO Leadership	CO Leadership, Technical Units, Resource Mobilization & Strategic Partnerships Advisor
	3.2. Continuously engage and support country offices to actively participate in, and where possible, assume leadership roles within national coordination platforms like the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and financing Technical Working Groups (TWGs).	Medium	Technical Units	PCU CO Leadership, Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor, Resource Mobilization &

Recommendations	Suggested actions	Priority level	Lead unit/role	Other units involved
<i>Links to findings: 7, 10, 13, 19, 20, 21, 26, 31, 37</i>	Additionally, maintain and further strengthen strategic engagement with key government ministries and parliamentarians.			Strategic Partnerships Advisor
	3.3. Continue prioritizing partnerships with civil society by supporting large coalitions of CSOs including youth-led, women-led, and feminist organizations, to strengthen regional and national advocacy efforts for the realization of the 3TRs. This means engaging CSOs, at country and regional levels, not just as implementing partners but as strategic advocacy partners.	Medium	Gender Unit, Technical Units	Resource Mobilization & Strategic Partnerships Advisor, CO Leadership
4. Strengthen the operationalization of the F2FF agenda, with a focus on further dissemination of guidance, fostering ownership at regional and country levels, and redefining engagement norms with donor and IFI partners towards increased visibility and influence on partner's funding and policy decisions.	4.1. Continue dissemination of guidance and tools to implement the F2FF agenda, with strong regional office leadership and direction, to foster acceptance and action by country offices.	High	Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor	WCARO Leadership, PCU, CO Leadership
	4.2. Implement strict standards for the inclusion of F2FF initiatives within the CPDs assessed through CPD peer review and quality assurance processes	High	PCU	WCARO Leadership, Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor
	4.3. Develop a regional 3TRs financing framework to help COs identify opportunities and develop strategies. This includes evidence generation on key financing trends affecting the 3TRs at regional and country levels e.g. overall investment amounts, including by programs, by economic classification, by geographic regions, budget execution rates, total funding needs and gaps, fiscal space options.	Medium	Social Policy and Health Economics Advisor	Technical Units, PCU, CO Leadership
	4.4. Foster and sustain country offices' engagement in formalizing partnerships with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, and the European Union in order to better influence their financing and policy benchmarks to country governments.	High	WCARO Leadership	CO Leadership, Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor, Technical Units
	4.5 Increase focus on leveraging public finances for the 3 TRs (i.e. influencing the annual budget cycle and donor/IFI funding priorities), including through strategic regional initiatives (e.g. 3TR financing dashboards, SMART Advocacy).	High	Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor	CO Leadership
	4.6. Further engage HQ, to explore ways to develop ethical cooperation and partnerships with the private sector, particularly with extractive industries, per the current WCA context with majority of country's GDP dependent on extractives and the current declining funding landscape.	High	Resource Mobilization & Strategic Partnerships Advisor	Leadership (Regional Director and Deputy Regional Director), Social Policy & Health Economics Advisor
<i>Links to conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 / Links to findings: 2, 20, 22, 30, 31, 33, 37</i>				

Recommendations	Suggested actions	Priority level	Lead unit/role	Other units involved
5. Increase investments in targeted evidence generation, focusing on 3TRs alignment, LNOB, addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, integrating the effects of megatrends, UNFPA's normative role and the F2F agenda. These are the most critical and the least operationalized strategic shifts, with inadequacies noted in evidence generation. <i>Links to conclusion: 1, 2, 4, 5 / Links to findings: 3, 4, 11, 29, 34</i>	5.1. Improve M&E guidance and processes to measure LNOB implementation, including indicators for LNOB in M&E results matrices, verification processes, and guidance on analyses on intersectionality.	High	M&E	PCU, Technical Units
	5.2. Invest in evaluation to systematically measure outcomes of UNFPA's policy influence and policy implementation support efforts.	Medium	M&E	Intergovernmental Adviser, Technical Units
	5.3. Improve environmental scanning related to megatrends and generate evidence on the effects of megatrends on the 3TRs, including linkages across megatrends, and the evolving demographic landscape and its implications.	Medium	Population & Data	Intergovernmental Adviser, Technical Units
	5.4. Conduct research and evaluations on GTA, especially documenting changes in harmful social and gender norms and behaviours, as well as increasing evidence on GTA intersections e.g. political crisis and climate change, food insecurity, and humanitarian crises.	Medium	Population & Data	Intergovernmental Adviser, Gender & Human Rights, Humanitarian Units
	5.5 Enhance strategic communication through targeting specific partners with contextually appropriate and evidence-based messaging, using powerful tools like storytelling and regional campaigns to inspire action around sensitive issues.	Medium	Strategic Communications	Technical Units
6. In order to address HR gaps, consider hiring additional personnel for highly specialized and critical roles; potentially shared multi-country roles due to resource constraints, leveraging capacity of partners where feasible, further investment in capacity building, as well as organizational systems development for other areas. <i>Links to conclusions: 1, 3, 5 / Links to findings: 1, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41</i>	6.1. Invest in additional CO-based personnel, with shared LOE across multiple countries, for humanitarian, financing, strategic communication, KM, and safety and security personnel needs, to optimize available resources.	High	DHR	WCARO Leadership
	6.2. Invest further in capacity building on core themes like advocacy and resource mobilization at both regional and country levels. This includes following up with participants of previous workshops to actively provide peer-to-peer support, enhance knowledge transfer, and skills development across the teams in-country offices.	High	WCARO Leadership, CO Leadership	Resource Mobilization & Strategic Partnerships Advisor, Technical Units, Country Offices (Deputy Reps & Partnerships/Resource Mobilization Officers)
	6.3. Maintain the recent levels of increased investments in regional strategic communication, KM, and operational systems improvements, including improvements in onboarding processes, and sustained technical assistance to senior management at country level.	Medium	WCARO Leadership	Communication, KM & IOM Units.
	6.4. Prioritize regular and in-depth social norms and value clarification trainings for staff at regional and country levels	Medium	DHR	Gender & Human Rights Units

7. Annexes

Annex 1: Summary of Findings from Country Missions

Country Mission

Ghana

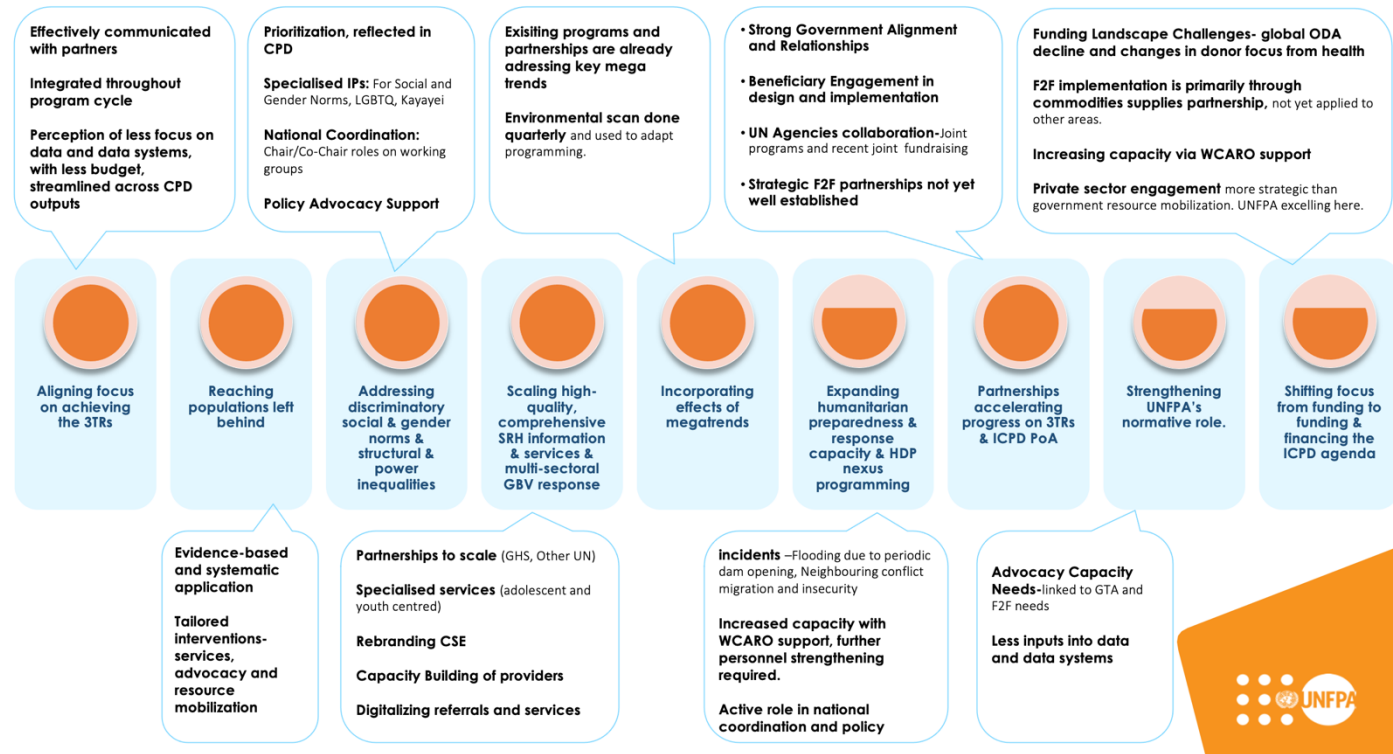
Relevance

1. All accelerators and shifts are relevant in the country context. Priority accelerators and shifts in this CO are: LNOB, Addressing Social and Gender Norms, Strengthening UNFPA's normative role and the F2FF agenda. There is increasing relevance of expanding humanitarian preparedness and response with neighbouring country conflicts resulting in an increase in migrants, and periodic dam openings resulting in flooding. There are also changes in the funding landscape with declining ODA and changes in donor's focus in the country from health to other sectors that increase the relevance of the F2FF agenda.

Operationalization

2. All accelerators and shifts have been operationalized to varying degrees, with more progress with Aligning to the 3TRs, LNOB, Addressing Social and Gender Norms, and Scaling SRH Information and Services and Partnerships, Incorporating Mega Trends, than Humanitarian Preparedness and Response, Strengthening UNFPA's normative role and F2FF agenda. The CO reported significant RO support on Humanitarian Preparedness and Response and the F2FF agenda.

Fig 23. Progress on Operationalizing Strategic Shifts/Accelerators in Ghana



Mali

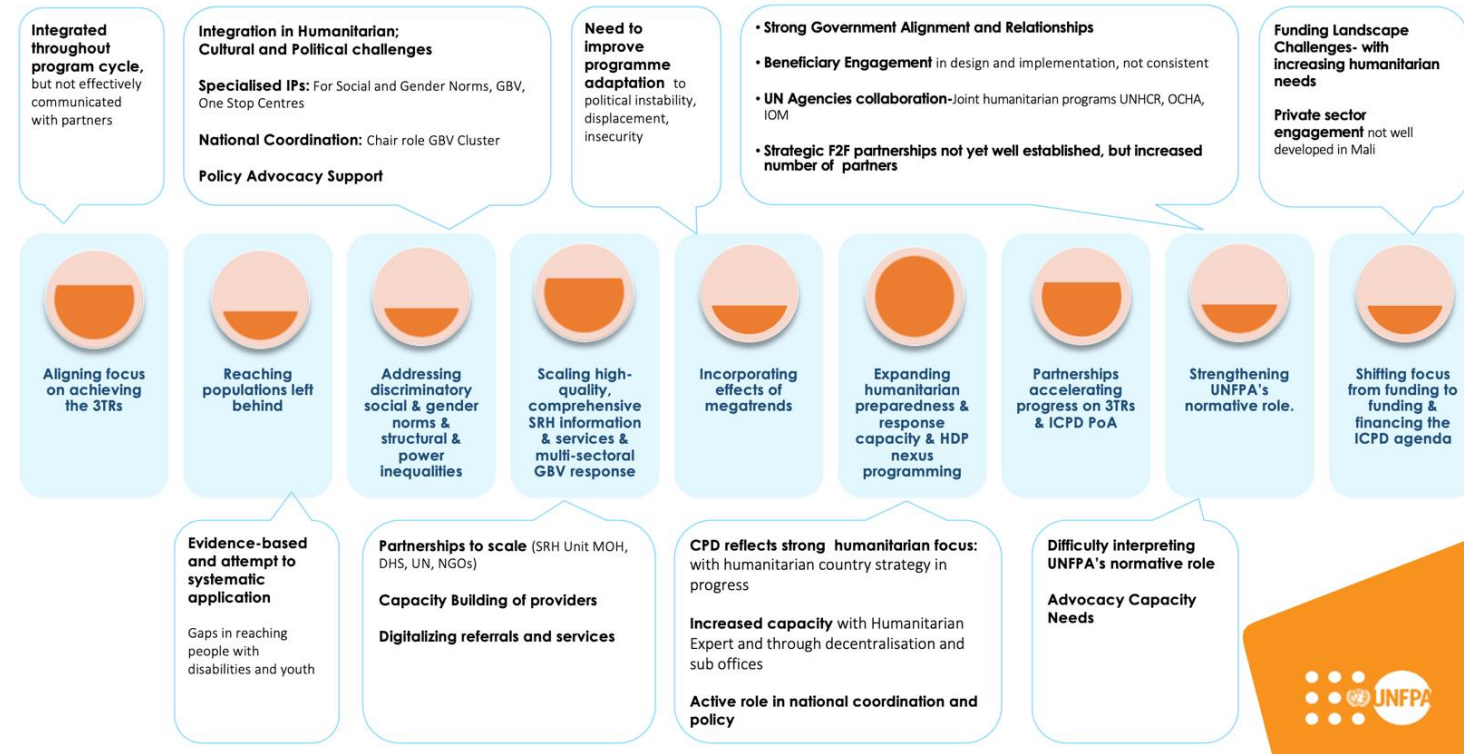
Relevance

1. The humanitarian preparedness and response strategic shift is very relevant in the country, particularly with its challenging humanitarian context. The mission also highlighted the increasing relevance of addressing the impact of megatrends and expanding partnerships as these are complementary to humanitarian programming and the varied needs of the target populations.

Operationalization

2. There has been significant progress operationalizing the humanitarian preparedness and response strategic shift. The Mali CO has expanded its humanitarian portfolio, including support for health services in regions like Gao, Menaka, Timbuktu, Mopti, and Ségou. This includes both fixed and mobile health services providing SRH and GBV services. Community engagement is a key component of this expansion, with efforts to raise awareness, create safe spaces, and involve men and boys in prevention and response efforts. There is also the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) that is now in place to address immediate needs of displaced populations, with rapid deployment of personnel and resources to affected areas. There have also been support from WCARO towards increased capacity, with preparedness activities such as the development of the MISP, decentralization of services to sub-offices, and training of CSOs for emergency response. There is however a need to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace Nexus through existing partnerships and operational capacities, as HDP programming is somewhat limited. There are also varied levels of understanding and implementation of other accelerators, with good progress; with aligning to the 3TRs; and establishing strong partnerships with NGOs, government authorities, and UN agencies to deliver services, particularly in conflict-affected regions, however, there is a need for further strengthen these partnerships towards being more strategic. There is less progress with integrating the effects of megatrends (displacement, migration, and climate change). The CO recognizes the need for more systematic integration and adaptation in programming as this will enhance humanitarian programming and achieving the 3TRs.

Fig 24. Progress on Operationalizing Strategic Shifts/Accelerators in Mali



Annex 2: A deep dive on addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities

Background

1. According to UNFPA's 2022 guidance notes on integrating the gender and social norms output into CPDs, "gender and social norms are implicit and informal rules that most people accept and follow. They are influenced by our beliefs, economic and political circumstances, and sometimes the rewards and sanctions we expect for adhering to or disobeying them." These norms are deeply rooted, as individuals are socialized this way from childhood, enabling sub-conscious agreement and making them difficult to question. Norms classified as Identity-based norms (class, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) reflect and reinforce power inequalities. Others are social norms that dictate the expected behaviour in a given context e.g. health seeking behaviour. Gender norms usually disadvantage women, girls, gender non-conforming men and boys, and people of diverse gender identities. Beyond perceptions and expectations, gender norms are also reinforced by underlying social structures and cultural elements, and in some cases embedded in institutions through discriminatory policies.⁵⁹

2. There has been progress globally and in the WCA region in addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, however there are wide disparities in progress with unacceptably high indices persisting. These indices are driven by deeply ingrained norms, such that resulting harmful practices are considered normal even by women and girls who are subjected to them. In West and Central Africa, social norms are driven by both religious and cultural expectations. Patriarchy is also widespread across the region, manifesting itself as oppressive, perpetuating the subordination of women and girls and challenging progress on gender equality. These discriminatory norms increase the difficulty in addressing GBV, child marriage, FGM, and other forms of violence; and the persistence of these practices further exacerbates gender disparities and the poverty cycle.⁶⁰

3. The 2023 OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)⁶¹ report found that the levels of discrimination are the highest, worldwide, in Africa, with a score of 52 on a 0 to 100 scale. The report highlights the role of families in perpetuating discrimination that prevents women and girls from active engagement in public and economic spheres; with women primarily responsible for unpaid care and domestic work. Globally, women spend 2.6 times more hours on unpaid care and domestic work than men do, a number that reaches 4.1 times more hours in Africa, and 6 times more hours in West Africa (ranging from 2 times more in Nigeria to 17 times more in Mali). This illustrates the persistence of deep-rooted unequal power relations between women and men in the household.⁶² Further, patriarchal norms, cultural and religious expectations, and gender stereotypes, also restrict women and girl's access to health, education, economic opportunities and participation in decision-making processes.⁶³

⁵⁹ UNFPA (2022) GUIDANCE NOTE: Integrating the Gender and Social Norms Output into Country Program Documents

⁶⁰ UNFPA (2024) Acceleration Paper #4: Accelerating progress towards zero gender-based violence and harmful practices in West and Central Africa

⁶¹ SIGI measures discrimination in social institutions (defined as the established set of formal and/or informal laws, norms and practices that govern behaviours in society) faced by women and girls throughout their lives.

⁶² Social Institutions and Gender Index. 2023. SIGI 2023 Global Report: Gender Equality in Times of Crisis. Available at: www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/sigi-2023-global-report_4607b7c7-en

⁶³ Gaëlle Ferrant, OECD Development Centre, Nadia Hamel, OECD Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. Gender equality in West Africa. The key role of social norms (2018)

4. African governments are working to address gender inequality, notably through the adoption of national gender strategies and implementing legislative reforms. However, passing laws and devising national strategies are inadequate, with legal loopholes and customary practices that still weaken women's rights. Truly transforming social and gender norms requires a solid understanding of the political economy, territorial realities and power dynamics; with endogenous efforts that cascade from regional to national and grassroots levels; and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including men and boys, to change attitudes on gender roles.⁶⁴

Strategy Description

5. UNFPA's Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 clearly placed significant emphasis on addressing discriminatory gender and social norms in order to transform unequal gender power structures in societies, accelerate the achievement of the ICPD Program of Action, and to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. It is one of six "interconnected outputs" towards achieving the 3TRs. The output reads: "By 2025, strengthened mechanisms and capacities of actors and institutions to address discriminatory gender and social norms to advance gender equality and women's decision-making." The SP also identifies human rights and gender-transformative approaches, which include actions to challenge discriminatory norms, as one of six accelerators. Further, the SP also includes a strategic shift "Incorporating the multisectoral needs of women, adolescents and youth, and addressing structural inequalities."⁶⁵

6. The WCARO team developed a set of eight acceleration papers to further unpack and refine the Regional Program, analysing the root causes of key issues and expatiating core initiatives for the region. Each paper covers one of these themes (Strategic Foresight, Zero preventable maternal death, Zero unmet need for FP, Zero GBV harmful practices, Innovation, Data, Demographic dividend and Humanitarian Acceleration). All eight papers include initiatives to address discriminatory social and gender norms, as an underlying factor affecting progress on all 3TRs. These initiatives⁶⁶, although primarily culled from the accelerator paper on Zero GBV and harmful practices, are also articulated as applicable across all the other 7 papers with clear linkages to the respective themes. They include:

- Advocate for policy changes and legal reforms to promote gender equality and protect women's rights
- Engage with religious and traditional leaders to challenge harmful social norms and promote positive masculinities
- Invest in education and empowerment programs for women and girls, including CSE
- Strengthen civil society partnerships, particularly with women-led and youth-led organizations, to amplify marginalized voices and advocate for policy change
- Demonstrate the economic burden of harmful practices and gender-based violence in order to secure investments and prioritization by governments and regional bodies
- Promote gender-transformative approaches across all interventions

⁶⁴ Gaëlle Ferrant, OECD Development Centre, Nadia Hamel, OECD Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat. Gender equality in West Africa. The key role of social norms (2018)

⁶⁵ UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, Annex 4: Global and regional Programs, 7. West and Central Africa regional Program

⁶⁶ UNFPA (2024) Acceleration Paper #4: Accelerating progress towards zero gender-based violence and harmful practices in West and Central Africa

- Conduct power analyses to understand power dynamics and inform targeted interventions
- Foster value clarification within organizations and among partners to address unconscious biases and ensure commitment to promoting gender equality and human rights"

7. The WCARO MTR report has also outlined more streamlined strategies on how the regional office is supporting COs to accelerate progress towards addressing discriminatory social and gender norms as well as structural and power inequalities.⁶⁷ These strategies aim to expand the frame of analysis in the rapidly evolving WCA context, systematically analysing needs and implementing agile and adaptable approaches. They include:

- Increase local knowledge on drivers of GBV and Harmful Practices (HP) by strengthening partnerships with research institutions, CSOs, and think tanks. **(Partnerships for Evidence Generation)**
- Harness Political champions and mobilize funds for regional initiatives to combat GBV and promote positive masculinities. **(Political Champions & Resource Mobilization)**
- Challenge harmful social norms and promote gender equality through expanded and strategic partnerships with faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, and women-led and youth-led organizations **(Partnerships with Change Makers)** and scaling up interventions beyond the confines of joint programs, considering interconnections between FGM and Child Marriage (CM). **(Transversality)**
- Strengthen legislative and policy frameworks through mapping gender-related laws, policies, and strategies, as well as supporting the drafting of regional conventions to end violence against women and girls and to strengthening Government operationalization of laws and legislations. **(Enabling Policy & Legal Frameworks)**
- Strengthen technical guidance to COs to increase girls' access to education and life skills and prioritize the work on CSE. **(Placing adolescent girls at the centre)**

Findings

Implementation Approaches (What Works & What Doesn't)

Finding 1: Creating non-judgmental and non-directive spaces for communication in communities as well as allowing communities lead in defining discriminatory norms and endogenously co-creating solutions to address these norms, works!

8. The creation of safe spaces in communities for non-judgmental and non-directive communication, as well as complementary support for other community development needs is an approach that works. This approach works because it builds a foundation of trust and subsequently creates access to engage in discussions regarding more sensitive discriminatory gender and social norms. This was found to be key to initiating social behaviour change in community settings. A great example of this approach is seen in Tostan's (UNFPA Implementing Partner) Community Empowerment Program in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Senegal.^{68,69} UNFPA country programs include a variety of forums including community committees, women-friendly spaces, and husband schools that serve as safe spaces and largely provide the opportunity for community communication and participation

⁶⁷ West and Central Africa - 2022-2025 SP office MTR implementation survey

⁶⁸ Breakthrough Generation Initiative Mixed-Methods Final Evaluation Report July 2023

⁶⁹ <https://tostan.org/programs/community-empowerment-program/>

that are driving Social Behavioural Change (SBC) at the community level, however there is a need for more inclusivity with more community members participating in these spaces.

9. It is also important for discriminatory norms to be identified endogenously. Past efforts by external actors to define and impose changes in community norms simply did not work, and often resulted in unsustainable change in the long run. What works, however, is allowing communities to co-create solutions where they lead the identification of what needs to change and they introduce new behaviours to replace old ones, without cohesion. Experts from UNICEF also described the use of the human-centred design playbook, tested in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Guinea Bissau to implement this approach of building together with significant community leadership. They also emphasized the need for diversity in the stakeholders engaged (e.g. engaging men, religious leaders, and other community members), as well as discussing other issues the community is facing, not just the drivers of the social and gender norms of interest. This increases the legitimacy to bring up more sensitive issues in future conversations.

10. Some results noted from these two intertwined approaches include: increased joint decision-making and improved community attitudes towards sensitive issues. Supporting organizations have also been able to gain a better understanding of beneficiaries' perspectives and the diversity of perspectives among older and younger members, or among parents and adolescent girls, where the former seeks to uphold traditional norms and the latter no longer hold on to these, or in other cases where the latter upholds the norms for a variety of reasons which would not have been clear if the engagement process was not based on human-centred design approaches.

Finding 2: Messaging and interventions that facilitate social and gender norms change must utilize a human rights framing, drawing on African human rights mechanisms, instead of being laser-focused on specific norms.

11. Human-rights framings is another key element to success in changing discriminatory norms, with increasing sensitivity and push-backs in the region on SRHR, GBV prevention, and HP prevention programming. This involves facilitating community discussions on equity, dignity, choice, and human rights for all, instead of focusing on a specific norm, allowing communities themselves to question the areas where there are gaps and where members of their communities have been excluded or denied access to services. This approach enables the community to expand on positive norms or establish new norms that are more inclusive for its members, leading to a breakdown of discriminatory traditional practices. The Tostan program describes these human rights framed conversations as alternate realities that stimulate the motivation and capacity of communities to aspire for better. Further, the human rights framing also means integrating local perspectives and values more effectively in engagement strategies, by drawing on African human rights mechanisms when engaging with ministries/member states and communities. This helps address the increasing resistance among member states, as well as prevent any wrong perception of Western imposition.

Finding 3: Conducting strong gender analysis to better understand local contexts enables more effective evidence-based gender-transformative approaches grounded in local realities.

12. The complexity of the current environment in the WCA region was widely acknowledged, with rights contested and increasing push-back from member states as earlier noted. A key initiative to effectively navigate in this context is strengthening gender analysis, especially towards a better understanding of local contexts. There is a need for more evidence on what works with respect to social behaviour change, as well as analysis across generations to understand increasing differences in norms across age groups. UNFPA collaborates with UNICEF in evidence generation through their joint regional programs, and several country program with respect to supporting national gender analysis, developing demographic profiles to understand women, young people, and adolescents' needs, and FGM studies amongst others.

Finding 4: Employing a socio-ecological approach to increase understanding of the dynamic interrelations among various personal and environmental factors, by combining interventions that effect change with a wide range of stakeholders at different levels, to facilitate collective and more sustainable change.

13. There is a need to effectively utilize the social-ecological approach⁷⁰ that facilitates the engagement of different key stakeholders towards collective change. **At the community level**, there are challenges faced in implementing gender-transformative approaches that focus on service provision to beneficiaries, where social workers face resistance from communities due to mistrust and misunderstandings around gender-transformative programs, particularly in remote areas. Community dynamics play a pivotal role in successful programs, which often involves extensive community engagement with a diversity of key actors, and further focus on community influencers. This approach further highlights the importance of engaging men, religious leaders, and traditional leaders in SBC interventions, alongside empowering women and girls. An example cited was a child marriage prevention project in Nigeria called “keeping girls in school” that introduced safe spaces for girls education in the community (including SRHR content). The project engaged traditional leaders and implemented the safe space in the traditional leaders homes, giving them visibility of the communication provided to the girls, thereby gaining their trust. This resulted in further support from these leaders for girls’ education, promoting more sustainable change.

14. There is also a need to strengthen partnerships by moving from tokenistic partnerships to partners that truly act as agents of change. Examples of active partnerships include: religious leaders playing a role in child marriage prevention as community mediators in the SWEDD project, and as advocates for GBV prevention in Mali; partnering with women organizations and GBV survivors with lived experiences as advocates in their communities in Nigeria; training for magistrates to support the transformation of harmful traditional values in Congo Brazzaville; working with the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs on nationwide consultations towards more inclusive rights-based, and gender-sensitive policies on religion in Ghana, amongst others. There is however a tendency to continue working with the same groups of the community over time, indicating that establishing new norms requires wider engagement by accessing different networks of actors within the community.

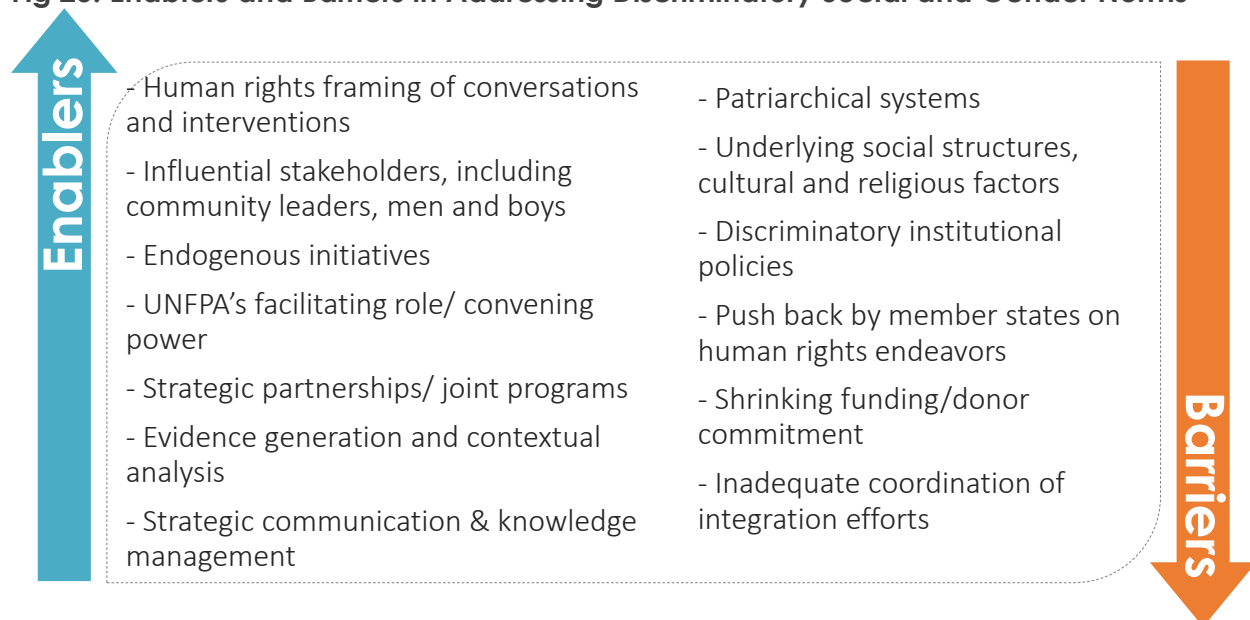
⁷⁰ UNFPA (2020) Technical note on gender-transformative approaches in the global Program to end child marriage phase II: A summary for practitioners.

15. **At the local government level**, programs are working with local officers and creating linkages with trained community groups and leaders (traditional and religious) for improved advocacy. Also to improve service delivery, they are working systematically with both health providers and local government officials who supervise them on attitude change, as well as further strengthening local governance systems, towards optimizing government allocations to improve outcomes for women and girls.

16. **At the national level**, programs are working with governments to develop relevant sectoral policies and laws, partnering with national government actors to build capacity of sub-national level government units and local organizations, and partnerships with media platforms for nationwide campaigns.

17. **At the regional level**, there is good collaboration, including among relevant UN agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNWOMEN), as well as largely effective joint programs, collaborations, and conventions, including the Ouagadougou Partnership, the Spotlight Initiative, SWEDD project, and regional workshops with national human rights institutions. There is also a strong appetite for continued and expanded collaboration on regional initiatives, especially with a shrinking funding landscape and shared priorities. There is also stronger engagement with international bodies and financial institutions to support gender empowerment and norm change initiatives.

Fig 25. Enablers and Barriers in Addressing Discriminatory Social and Gender Norms



Forward Looking Perspective/Recommendations

1. A shift in community entry approaches

18. This means curating programming that utilizes successful approaches including:

- Non-judgmental and non-directive spaces for communication in communities.
- Communities co-leading in defining and addressing discriminatory norms.
- Messaging and interventions that utilize a human rights framing, and draw on African human rights mechanisms.

- Genuine interest and support for other community needs, and multisectoral programs that include promoting women's economic and social empowerment, potentially through joint programs or partnerships with organizations specialising in economic empowerment.

2. Diversifying and strengthening stakeholders to drive change

19. Increasing diversity among stakeholders engaged, continued engagement and capacity building of stakeholders/champions reflecting different segments of society - decision-makers, religious and traditional leaders, women and youth organizations etc. This can include:

- Wider engagement by accessing different networks of individuals within the community.
- Engagement with young people beyond forums and dialogues, increasingly engaging them as agents of change across the 3TRs. Investing in girls and boys across generations, across income groups, giving them voice, enabling their participation in advocacy and service delivery efforts. This engagement will also further localize aid towards sustainability.
- Empowerment of women and young people by setting up programs to increase their rights/access to vocational training and employment, as well as support their active participation in decision-making and leadership.

3. Optimizing existing international and UN agency partnerships, and establishing new ones

20. While communities play a pivotal role in driving change, external support and collaboration are essential to maximize impact and sustain progress. This can include:

- An increase in joint global/regional programs with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and other international organizations and agencies working to address discriminatory social and gender norms.
- Stronger engagement with international bodies and financial institutions to resource gender empowerment and norm change initiatives.
- Improved regional coordination among UN agencies towards creating synergies around shared goals optimizing available resources for target communities

4. Strengthening gender and social norms analysis for adaptive programming

21. The complex regional context requires evidence generation on gender and social norms to inform context-appropriate GTA, especially as changing norms and behaviours are a long-term endeavour. This can be achieved by:

- Increased research and evaluations on GTA, especially documenting changes in harmful social and gender norms and behaviours, in collaboration with academic and non-academic research partners.
- Improved monitoring and reporting of gender and GBV indicators with continuous analysis on successes and gaps at country and regional levels.
- Disseminating evidence on best practices (safe spaces, future husbands club, mobile clinics, mentoring, etc.). with a view to their adaptation and implementation across countries in the sub-region
- Building a regional expenditure monitoring platform and country financing dashboards, that provide COs with essential data for national budget engagement and produce financing reports on maternal health, FP, and GBV.

- Developing a regional monitoring tool to measure technical assistance and advocacy results.

5. Strengthen organizational readiness through organizational values, personnel capacity, and programmatic tools.

22. In addition to earlier recommendations for UNFPA's interactions with external stakeholders, some inward-looking initiatives are also recommended, to be implemented at country, regional, and HQ levels. These include:

- Setting up programmatic tools/resources that enable increased contextualization of accelerators/strategic shifts/programming at the country level. An example is the new FP strategy and its associated intervention selection tool providing evidence-based decision-making support for countries in the intervention selected process. This currently only exists for FP but should be scaled to the other 2TRs.
- Strengthening human resource capacity to better lead social norms initiatives through the introduction of social norms experts and/or stronger collaboration with SBC-focused organizations, ensuring the right capacities at all levels of the organization.
- Strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors to implement gender transformative approaches within humanitarian settings, and the capacity of gender focal points to implement gender interventions in humanitarian contexts.
- Integrating gender equality in the structure of the organization at all levels, including employing a feminist approach to strategic planning and applying GTA in recruitment and training processes.

Annex 3: A deep dive on expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming in the region

Background

1. West and Central Africa is one of the regions with the greatest humanitarian needs in the world. In 2024, an estimated 65.1 million people were in need.⁷¹ At the same time, the region hosts some of the most underfunded and under-supported crises. These humanitarian crises are impacted and driven by megatrends including the demographic dividend, climate change, displacement and migration and peace and security.⁷² 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) Program of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. As a consequence, the latest Global and Regional Program (GRP) includes an Output on Humanitarian action for the first time, more specifically GRP Output 5. i.e. Strengthened capacity of critical actors and systems in preparedness, by 2025 through early action and the provision of life-saving interventions that are timely, integrated, conflict and climate-sensitive, gender-transformative, and peace-responsive.⁷³

3. Achieving the three transformative results will be a challenge without significant investment in humanitarian preparedness and response. This is considering that over half of all maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and fragile settings, reproductive health and other life-saving maternal health supplies and access are interrupted during crises and the risk of gender-based violence and harmful practices increases.⁷⁴ Almost half of the countries in West and Central Africa (11 of 23 countries) are projected to have more than 100 per cent increase in the number of people in food crisis: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Niger and Nigeria.⁷⁵ Increased poverty and food insecurity are driven by climate-related loss of livelihoods, affecting maternal health.

4. Furthermore, 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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷

⁷¹ OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2024

⁷² Humanitarian Funding Forecast, 2023

⁷³ UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025

⁷⁴ Inter-Agency Working Group on RH in Crisis (IAWG), 2023

⁷⁵ ECHO, Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2023

⁷⁶ World Bank Annual Report 2023

⁷⁷ UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-21

5. Humanitarian crises are now also impacting countries in the region that were traditionally considered low-risk. As a result of violent extremism and transnational organized crime, spill over effects in the countries in 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 about 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.⁷⁸



Strategy Description

6. According to the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, 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. Given the context and the known risk factors, WCARO is focused on improving 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”.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ UNHCR Global Trends Report 2023

⁷⁹ UNDRR Annual Report 2020

7. The strategy aims to increase the operational flexibility to deliver quality programs 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 program 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.

8. UNFPA is also committed to integrating its work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. 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.

Findings

Implementation Approaches (What Works)

9. In the past two years of implementing humanitarian programs in WCA, several initiatives have been implemented with differing levels of success. Some of the more successful interventions that are making a difference include: capacity-building initiatives, decentralization of teams, delivery mechanisms, and partnerships, described in more detail below:

Finding 1: WCARO capacity-building support, the recruitment of humanitarian coordinators at P4/P5 level, and the Integration of humanitarian and development staff in countries is increasing CO capacity, improving coordination, and promoting the double nexus approach. There are however human resources barriers that persist.

10. Capacity-building initiatives led by the regional office including workshops and technical assistance are contributing to increased humanitarian preparedness and response capacity in country offices. Several countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and CAR) now have a dedicated full-time specialist coordinating their humanitarian portfolio. This role is enabling these countries to make quick progress in establishing their humanitarian programs and fundraising for humanitarian crises. Among those, Mali has been utilizing integrated teams to coordinate its humanitarian programs. This integration of humanitarian and development staff is creating synergy, enabling the humanitarian program to leverage experts from technical units, and promoting the double nexus approach.

The growing gender capacity in countries with larger teams is contributing to strengthening humanitarian programming with UNFPA playing a major role in GBV in emergency settings, beyond the traditional role of heading GBV Clusters.

11. Although the utilization of development staff has been beneficial, these personnel are taking on added responsibilities and an excessive workload in some cases. There are still inadequacies in humanitarian staffing across countries due to funding constraints, and low retention of humanitarian specialists especially due to threats to their safety with ongoing conflicts and political instability in the region. There are also language-related challenges with some key humanitarian guidance and training curricula not available in French and Portuguese.

Finding 2: Decentralization of coordination to sub-national levels introducing the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), and utilizing mobile teams is increasing the reach and timeliness of the humanitarian response.

12. Countries like Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria first and then Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as well, have also begun decentralizing their humanitarian response to sub-national levels with offices in regions with crises leading the response there, and mobile teams being deployed as needed. In the above countries, through the Rapid Response Mechanism, UNFPA in collaboration with other UN Agencies and partners act rapidly to address immediate needs of target populations; especially recently displaced population. This approach involves UNFPA deploying personnel to distribute dignity and SRH kits, run a mobile clinic to provide immediate support and treatment to those in need, as well as conducting rapid needs assessment for follow up visits including identifying pregnant women or survivors in need of referral for specialized care. These efforts are helping overcome the poor infrastructure in countries, including damaged roads, lack of reliable transportation and limited communication networks, which delay humanitarian action, but they are also somewhat affected by these challenges.

Finding 3: Partnerships are also playing an important role in humanitarian programming, including collaborations with national authorities, other UN agencies, and CSOs, leveraging their strengths to expand humanitarian efforts, including fundraising.

13. UNFPA partnership strategy is based on a strong relationship with national and regional/provincial authorities to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate humanitarian and resilience interventions. UNFPA is also collaborating with other UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR) in the context of humanitarian programming. Lastly, UNFPA has also increased the number and types of partnerships with CSOs across humanitarian countries in the region.

Implementation Approaches (What is not working)

14. There are also several initiatives that are not effective or not adequately implemented. They range from gaps in service delivery offerings in humanitarian programming, a fundamental challenge with the HDP nexus approach and the need to evolve UNFPA's normative role. These are described in more detail below.

Finding 4. There are several services that are not effectively rolled out through humanitarian programs.

15. These services/initiatives with lower levels of inclusion and or delivery in humanitarian programs include: Mental Health services in GBV response, fistula programming, youth friendly and responsive SRH and Gender programs, male involvement in SRH and GBV programs, Insufficient data collection within humanitarian contexts limiting design of evidence-based interventions, and inadequate utilization of strategic communication tools in

these settings. This applies to most countries that initiated the humanitarian program like Chad, CAR, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali.

Finding 5. The triple nexus approach requires specific partnerships, since the peace component is not within UNFPA’s mandate. There is limited clarity of how to implement the triple nexus.

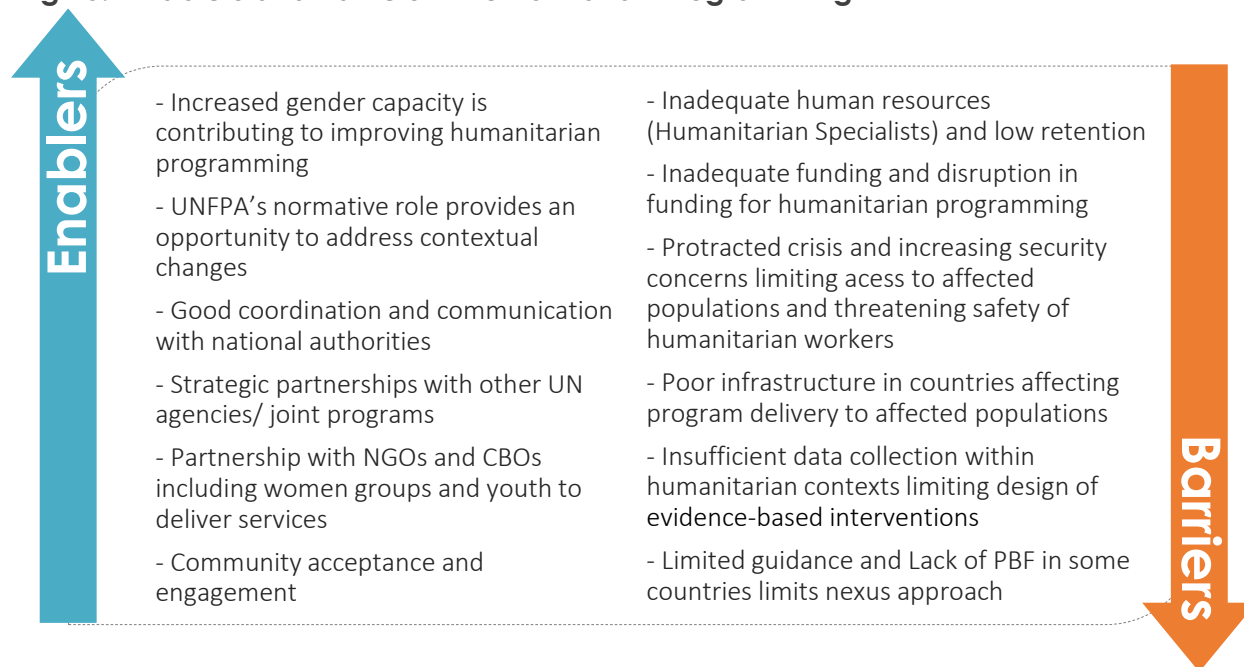
16. Since peacebuilding is not in the mandate of UNFPA, implementing of the Peace component of the triple nexus, requires collaboration with specific agencies with specific funds such as the Peace Building Fund (PBF). These funds are however not always available, especially in those countries where peace keepers had to withdraw due to recent political transitions. There is limited clarity across countries on how to implement the nexus approach, especially the integration with the peace component.

Finding 6. There is a need to evolve UNFPA’s normative role due to recent political transitions and insecurity.

17. The growing political instability and insecurity in WCA poses a threat to past progress in UNFPA’s mandate areas, and this linked to declining donor funding with some donors withdrawing from the region, and coincides with increasing resistance and push-backs from country governments on human rights. The rapidly changing social-political context indicated a need to assess and evolve UNFPA’s normative role to effectively response.

Enablers and Barriers for Humanitarian Programming

Fig 26. Enablers and Barriers in Humanitarian Programming



Forward Looking Perspective/Recommendations

1. Align humanitarian response strategy to address underlying causes of conflict as well as resilience building towards crises recovery.

19. This means aligning humanitarian action with political and social processes aimed at preventing and mitigating conflicts and sustaining peace, by addressing the drivers of conflict and the underlying root causes such as exclusion, systemic discrimination and marginalization. In addition, beginning to build resilience of national and local actors, and establishing a sustainable model for crisis recovery is also needed.

2. Provide guidance on implementing the HDP nexus approach, as it is becoming increasingly relevant per the protracted crises in the region.

20. There is a need to provide clarity on the approach, helping countries understand how to integrate activities across the continuum, especially the peace component, towards building resilience, adaptation, complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts. Suggested activities here include development of a guidance document, trainings and better positioning of UNFPA in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) to better leverage relationships to implement the triple nexus.

3. Differentiate humanitarian funds mobilization, towards consistent funding annually.

21. Consistency in humanitarian funding is also necessary due to the protracted nature of crises in the region; a funding mechanism with limited or no disruptions. This includes exploring private sector partnerships (for example Telecommunication's Companies, Oil Companies, Transport Companies, etc.) and Foundations, to fund humanitarian programs, and leveraging partnerships with other UN agencies and NGOs for joint fundraising efforts. Countries are already aligning multi-year Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which is expected to contribute to funding.

4. Continue capacity building and establish new partnerships at country and regional level.

22. Several ongoing capacity building efforts have been noted as effective and these initiatives should be sustained. These includes training for humanitarian midwives (including obstetric fistula), supply chain management and stock prepositioning as part of preparedness and acute response, and humanitarian leadership training. Related to this is the translation of documents and training curricula to French and Portuguese. Further, there is a need to establish new IP agreements with partners that can go the last mile in humanitarian areas to increase COs response capacity.

5. Strengthen strategic communication within humanitarian programming

23. Improving existing communication systems and strengthening messaging on key themes:

- Reinvigorating Communities of Practice for SRH and GBV to encourage information sharing and dialogue across countries, as well as documenting success stories, promising practices, lessons learned, and opportunities for scaling up these successes.
- Strengthen messaging on climate resilience and gender equality. Promoting the rights and choices of women and girls as fundamental to both development and peace. Also, climate resilience messaging is now very relevant, advocating for proactive measures to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the region.

6. Scale up innovative approaches and technology to improve access to information in humanitarian settings.

24. The following initiatives are recommended:

- Implementing an automated system to ensure all disaggregated data on emerging and existing humanitarian crises is current and can be used to inform advocacy, improvement in response and for dissemination to partners and other stakeholders.
- Supporting humanitarian country offices to improve their situation reports (SitReps) and initiate this process for spill over countries.
- Re-introducing a digitized/automated system for the collection of monthly humanitarian data, including humanitarian funding.

Annex 4: Lessons Learned

1) The 3TRs alignment and resource constraints: Although the portfolio of the region has been largely aligned to the 3TRs, it is clear that all three results cannot be addressed in the same way with the available resources. There continues to be a need to prioritize across the result areas.

2) Addressing social norms requires increased inclusivity and holistic methodologies: There is a need to ensure engagement of more stakeholders, especially accessing different networks of individuals in communities. Currently, programs report a tendency to continue reaching the same individuals in communities. In addition, applying holistic methodologies that include community trust building as an entry point promote community acceptance and community led change.

3) Operationalizing megatrends relies heavily on partnerships: Moving beyond evidence generation, to proactively incorporating the effects of megatrends in UNFPA's programs requires deliberate partnerships with organizations' whose mandates and skill sets directly address respective megatrends.

4) Systems strengthening and joint programming is the route to scaling up services: Scaling up SRH information and services as well as a multi-sectoral GBV response are likely to only be feasible through integrating key initiatives into broader health systems towards strengthening countries' health, and other social systems as well as through joint programs with UN agencies and other partners.

5) Decentralisation and dedicated personnel for humanitarian response: The current pools of experts "SURGE" and "GERT" do not adequately meet the HR needs in the region due to the protracted mid-level nature of the crises. Dedicated personnel for the humanitarian response are critical. In addition, decentralisation of teams to humanitarian regions in countries has been effective in improving the quality and efficiency of the response.

6) Level 3 accelerators: Strengthening partnerships, UNFPA's normative role and F2FF are more superior accelerators as they aim to evolve UNFPA's relationships, positioning and influence. These are catalytic and will facilitate change through influencing programming and funding of others. See *Fig 22. Accelerators Hierarchy*.

7) Data and evidence are an enabler: All strategic shifts and accelerators require improvements in targeted evidence generation to further optimize their operationalization. This suggests a need to view data and evidence as a cross cutting enabler, not just one of the accelerators, with clear initiatives to utilize data for both program delivery, and to optimize operationalization of accelerators.

8) Shared personnel to reduce chronic shortages: There are gaps in personnel across many departments including some specialist functions such as humanitarian, financing, strategic communication, KM, and safety and security specialists. These roles could benefit from personnel with shared LOE across several countries to optimize resources, and potentially cover all countries.

Annex 5: Detailed Findings for Sub-EQ2, EQ3, EQ4

The role of enablers in supporting operationalization of shifts and accelerators

Strategic communication as an enabler of acceleration

Q 2.1 To what extent has strategic communication facilitated WCARO's efforts to operationalize the accelerators and strategic shifts in the region?

Finding 1: Strategic communication is well recognized as an enabler, howbeit it is underutilized, with capacity gaps to effectively implement it in the region.

1. There is general consensus that this enabler is underutilized in the region. The current communications strategy for the region developed in 2019 is now dated, there was no communications specialist in the region in the past year, and many country offices utilize focal points instead of communications specialists due to funding constraints. These focal points often have limited skills, and have other primary roles they play in the organization. The result of the capacity gap in strategic communication is lower visibility of UNFPA's impact among external stakeholders especially donors and some Country Governments. The country survey indicates that strategic communication is a very important enabler for the following accelerators/shifts: strengthening partnerships (for 74% of countries), the F2FF agenda (70%), strengthening UNFPA's normative role (61%), 3TRs alignment (57%), addressing discriminatory social and gender norms (39%) and leaving no one behind (35%).

2. WCARO recently recruited a Communications Advisor to lead efforts under this theme, with momentum already being created with new capacity building activities now underway. Countries suggest improvement in strategic communication onboarding, sustained technical assistance to senior management, and systematically including this role in upcoming proposals to further strengthen strategic communications capacity.

Finding 2: There have been recent improvements in implementing this enabler, primarily through regional capacity building events and external stakeholder engagements. There are however suggestions of a need for increased evidence-based, contextually adapted communication and targeted communication to a more diverse set of stakeholders.

3. The resumption of the new WCARO Communications Advisor is already making a difference as evidenced by increased support from the regional office and external communication, according to both internal and external stakeholders. There have been recent activities at regional and country level, including dissemination of reports to external audiences (including 10 major donors), regional events and training e.g. a donor communications retreat, and communication training for country office leadership as part of management trainings. They also describe increased opportunities for networking and leveraging resources across countries. External stakeholders reference reports received and engagement visits.

4. Although there has been progress, there is still a lot of room for improvement, especially in making communication efforts more strategic through targeting specific partners with the right messaging, contextually appropriate and evidence-based, as well as using powerful tools like storytelling to inspire action around sensitive issues, and potentially launching regional level campaigns and messaging, given the similarity of issues across countries in WCA.

Human resource strategies as an enabler of acceleration

Q 2.2 To what extent has strategic communication facilitated WCARO's efforts to operationalize the accelerators and strategic shifts in the region?

Finding 3: The complement of human resources (skill sets and expertise levels) in the regional office at the start of the current Regional Program were misaligned with the requirement of the new plan. Having the right complement of personnel is viewed as necessary to implement the new regional Program.

5. The implementation of the current Regional Program necessitated an assessment of existing human resource capacity within the region, to understand their skill sets vis a vis the requirement of the new plan. The process resulted in termination of a significant number of personnel in the regional office, with more than half of the regional office and core senior management roles at the country offices (Representatives, Deputy Representatives and IOMs) replaced at the end of the realignment process.

6. The current set of regional staff are highly skilled (majority are have extensive subject matter expertise, many of which are new to UNFPA allowing for fresh ideas and innovation). The staff also have experience working in WCA or similar challenging contexts. Although some of these roles are replacements for existing roles, the new organigram creates linkages that prevent the siloed ways of working that have been pronounced in the past. For instance, a youth and adolescent specialist that straddles the gender unit and also the SRH unit. There are also advisors assigned to certain cross-cutting accelerators/shift e.g. the population advisor leads on megatrends. In addition, the humanitarian unit has been expanded in response to growing humanitarian crises in the region, and lastly, the region is the first to hire a Social Policy and Health Economics Advisor (SP&HEA) to lead the F2FF strategic shift. This was an important HR process that has better positioned the regional office to utilize accelerators and implement the strategic shifts. Recruitment processes were only finalized towards the end of 2023, with many members of the new team still settling into their roles. However the regional office has already rolled out a technical assistance matrix in 2022 to assess county office TA needs, and units in WCARO have already assigned focal points to provide TA to each country based on the identified needs. This will be done frequently.

7. There are also other ongoing realignment processes, including the decentralization of the Supply Chain Management Unit, with the WCARO support team being relocated to the region. Country offices in the region are also implementing realignment processes linked to recently approved CPDs. The country survey indicates that human resource management is a more important enabler for expanding humanitarian response capacity (for 30% of countries), than any other accelerator. It is also an enabler for the following accelerators/shifts: Scaling SRH and a multi-sectoral GBV response (22%), and 3TRs alignment (17%).

Knowledge management as an enabler of acceleration

Q 2.3 To what extent has strategic communication facilitated WCARO's efforts to operationalize the accelerators and strategic shifts in the region?

Finding 4: The regional office implements several centrally-led knowledge management initiatives. However, there are many other project or unit driven initiatives and good practices at regional and country level that can be leveraged for the organization.

8. There are several KM initiatives led by UNFPA WCARO and HQ, including workshops, webinars, retreats, and other learning events that introduce countries to innovations and good practices and allow cross-learning. There are however many other KM initiatives at the regional office that are driven by projects or units, that should be leveraged for organization-wide learning. The SWEDD project has developed a robust web-based KM platform that is expected to be launched imminently. The web-based platform will foster collaboration amongst countries. The project also hosts a CoP, and shares guides and briefs on best practices with decision makers and policy makers. The RM team has also set up shared folders, peer to peer CoPs, and hosts organisational RM retreats. Country offices also implement their own KM systems with different standards. There are also new systems being rolled out such as Quantum and Quantum Plus, that could benefit from better defined organizational KM processes.

Finding 5: There has been no central guidance/SOP from HQ and WCARO, resulting in countries utilizing different standards and processes, and bottlenecks in knowledge transfer, creating inefficiencies across some organizational processes. The newly recruited KM specialist is now standardizing KM processes after a recent assessment.

9. There is limited attention allocated to KM including both human and financial resources, as a result there is little or no harmonization of KM processes across the region, even where similar tools (paper-based or digital resources) are used. Examples range from personnel departures without clear handover notes as experienced in recent restructuring exercises, inadequate cascade of internal communication between CO leadership and country teams, and different filing systems for hard copy documents. These events create loss in data that was maintained implicitly by previous personnel, gaps in understanding across the organization and serious inefficiencies in business continuity. WCARO recently hired a new specialist to support KM, who is now rolling out tools (iDocs, Google Site, Templates), processes (KM Action Plan) and trainings to standardize and strengthen KM across the region, with 85% of WCARO staff already moving their documents to the shared environment, and similar processes being initiated with country offices.

Finding 6: Knowledge management is widely viewed as an important enabler for implementing several accelerators.

10. The country survey indicates that KM as an important enabler for:

- Integrating the effects of megatrends (for 65% of countries)
- Increasing the focus on “populations left behind” (48%)
- Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms (48%)
- Expanding the humanitarian response capacity to better safeguard the lives of women, adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls (39%)
- Scaling up the provision of high-quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, as part of universal health coverage. (35%)
- Funding to funding and financing agenda (32%)

The role of barriers in inhibiting operationalization of shifts and accelerators

Limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support as a barrier to acceleration

Q 3.1 To what extent has limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?

Finding 7: Limited stakeholder/donor commitment is viewed as an important barrier for implementing several accelerators.

11. Countries in this region have experienced limited stakeholder/donor commitment barriers, and note that it is an important barrier to all accelerators/shifts, with a range of 22%-57% of countries indicating this as a barrier for each accelerator/shift. More countries indicated this as a barrier to the F2FF agenda (57%), 3TR alignment (48%), strengthening partnerships (43%), and leaving no one behind (35%), than the other accelerators/shifts.

Finding 8: The region is experiencing a decline in funding, with several contextual challenges that have resulted in further decline, ranging from donor fatigue/mistrust, to competing crises, politicised funding, MICs deprioritised for donor funding and private sector donor restrictions.

12. Beyond declining donor support,^{80 81} there have been further changes in the region especially with donor fatigue and mistrust e.g. the loss of support from the French government (MUSKOKA multi-country program) after the recent political transitions in the region (Burkina, Mali and Niger) that have created an even greater need for aid. There are also competing crises with growing humanitarian crises steering away funding to other causes, and more politicised funding. The humanitarian funding available is also limited, with a focus on core needs (food and water). Only about 15% of humanitarian needs are funded, with many new and protracted crises. Countries that have attained MIC status are no longer being funded by traditional donors for health programs, with a change in focus to trade and other investment areas. These countries are also unable to effectively leverage the private sector with many extractive industry private sector prospects unallowable by UNFPA. The regional office aims to address the decline in donor support by diversifying the donor base to IFIs and foundations, however, IFIs have not been as responsive, may take 3-4 years of conversation, and engagement is often more complex.

Finding 9: There is increasing resistance from country governments with a real pushback related to some of UNFPA's areas of focus such as FP and women's rights, with strong resistance to FGM and LGBTQI+ related work.

13. There is low political commitment from country governments in the region, with limited or no budgets for many of UNFPA's areas of work. Further there are push-backs related to UNFPA's areas of focus, with governments not supporting programs in these areas, even where donor funding is available to support them. This also affects other UN agencies with

⁸⁰ WFP (2023) Food insecurity and malnutrition reach new highs in West and Central Africa as funding to address acute needs dwindles. <https://www.wfp.org/news/food-insecurity-and-malnutrition-reach-new-highs-west-and-central-africa-funding-address-acute>

⁸¹ OCHA (2024) West and Central Africa: 2024 Regional Funding Status - General Overview (as of 8 July 2024).

<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/west-and-central-africa-2024-regional-funding-status-general-overview-8-july-2024>

similar mandates (UN WOMEN, UNICEF), who also report increasing suspicion of the UN agenda and some strain on previously stronger relationships. This has worsened in the current context with more military governments, and early signs of a reversal in previous gains, such as women's participation in governance and access to education. The attempt to repeal the anti-FGM law in the Gambia was mentioned as another result. There are also some limitations in government support are due to insufficient government budgets and rising conflict/humanitarian crises, resulting in governments prioritizing security and infrastructure. These challenges will further limit ownership and sustainability of UNFPA's work, creating a cycle of donor dependence, in the context of shrinking donor funding.

Inadequate human capital as a barrier to acceleration

Q 3.2 To what extent has inadequate human capital hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?

Finding 10: There are still personnel gaps in the region, particularly at country level, with many accelerators/shifts implemented through focal points who are not specialized in the respective technical area, but are trained to deliver the role as feasible, sometimes in addition to their primary role within the organization, resulting in inefficiencies.

14. There are human resource gaps at country level, especially in Strategic Communication, KM, Advocacy, Resource Mobilization, Social Norms, F2FF and Humanitarian Preparedness and Response, with ongoing recruitment processes and plans to hire post-realignment in some countries. However, majority indicate designating focal points who receive technical support and trainings to play these roles. These focal points are often less effective and efficient than specialists, but seen as the best way forward considering organizational resource constraints. Countries in this region indicated that human capital is an important barrier to the following accelerators:

- Integrating the effects of megatrends, such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities, and digitalization, into programming. (for 53% of countries)
- Strengthening the UNFPA normative role in all countries where UNFPA is present. (65%)
- Reinvigorating and expanding partnerships, including those with the private sector, CSOs, and international financial institutions. (41%)

Finding 11: Some regional personnel's limited French language skills, and some country office personnel's limited English language skills serve as a barrier to providing effective support to country offices, despite language learning initiatives.

15. The WCA region's complexity includes the diversity of languages, with four official languages across its 23 countries. Majority of countries are however French-speaking. There are several technical experts at the regional office do not have French-language skills, and face difficulties providing technical support to francophone country offices due to language barriers. A recent internal survey identified this gap. The recruitment of non-bilingual personnel was a risk taken during the realignment process towards increasing diversity and access to a larger pool of skilled experts. The challenges with progress in the region mandated this risk. WCARO also set up deliberate language learning platforms for both English and French for regional and country office personnel to address the language barrier. These efforts have not been as effective. There are suggestions to increase use of French in regional office meetings, potentially on a rotating basis to enable personnel practice both languages.

There are also ongoing plans to incorporate this learning requirement in performance objectives of regional personnel towards increased accountability to learn, for both English and French Learning.

Finding 12: The limited availability of service delivery personnel (especially health workers), as well as their adaptability and flexibility in changing implementation contexts in the WCA region is a barrier to acceleration.

16. There are also challenges faced in service delivery, primarily around finding skilled health workforce, with limited personnel in countries. This is a longstanding challenge with many solutions already being deployed including recruitment of retirees, task shifting etc. There is also limited adaptability and flexibility of country governments and service delivery personnel to respond effectively in both development and humanitarian contexts, especially with the rapidly changing WCA implementation context, with a rise in humanitarian crises (floods, insecurity). These personnel are more prone to a reactive responsive with little capacity to anticipate issues and respond proactively.

Poor safety and security as a barrier to acceleration

Q 3.3 To what extent has poor safety and security in the region hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?

Finding 13: Safety and security challenges in the region are on the rise, with immediate impacts on program implementation including increasing funding needs to prevent inefficiencies and incidents.

17. There are several challenges to continued implementation, such as challenges with deploying staff in certain high-risk locations, equipment theft, and the need for personal protection equipment, which increases implementation costs. This hinders effort to reach vulnerable populations affected by crises. Poor safety and security has also resulted in operational inefficiencies especially logistical challenges in mobilizing personnel or making payments. The main strategic shift that poor safety was identified to affect by countries was expanding the humanitarian response capacity to better safeguard the lives of women, adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls, with 26 % of countries indicating this.

Finding 14: Safety and security teams capacity in the region is described as insufficient, and unable to effectively support countries in the region, without increased resources.

18. The security set up for the region as a whole is viewed as inadequate, with a regional security advisor and security associate that provide online assistance to most offices. The region however experiences significant security issues in a complex operating context that make security personnel a priority. Operations managers currently serve as security focal points at country level, but do not have backgrounds in security. Key informants suggest further guidance and clarity on the role of these focal points. There are also delays experienced in orienting new staff on security, which may create delays in implementation or create incidents when staff involved have no security background/knowledge.

19. Resources are inadequate to hire a specialist level security personnel, and to implement many other initiatives including procurement of security equipment, medical kits etc. There are suggestions to increase human resources by leveraging expertise across countries, with

security personnel able to work across a group of countries, taking advantage of the ECOWAS free movement policy.

Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure as a barrier to acceleration

Q 3.4 To what extent have geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?

Finding 15: Geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure are viewed as an important barrier to implementing several accelerators.

20. Countries in this region also indicated geographical /infrastructure barriers as an important barrier to accelerators/shifts that focus on increasing coverage or reaching specific population types. These include:

- Increasing the focus on “populations left behind”, and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first” (for 35% of countries)
- Scaling up the provision of high-quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, as part of universal health coverage. (26%)
- Integrating the effects of megatrends, such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities, and digitalization, into programming. (22%)

Finding 16: The impact of geographical barriers and a lack of infrastructure are complex, and interrelated, reducing access to services for populations and increasing the cost of implementation, with service delivery adaptations deployed to address them.

21. The main impact of this barrier on implementation are the challenges posed to accessing services, especially for populations in remote or inaccessible areas. These areas may be inaccessible due to several factors including humanitarian crises, poor road networks, or limited transportation. Poor infrastructure and crises also lead to unreliable internet and mobile phone coverage, hampering communication and data collection efforts. Many of these factors co-exist and further exacerbate the challenges faced by these populations. This subsequently leads to higher costs of implementation and logistical difficulties reaching remote populations, impacting service delivery coverage. Countries are using mobile clinics to provide essential services in remote areas, and partnering with local NGOs from these areas, to leverage their knowledge and community networks for reaching populations affected by these barriers.

Other barriers to acceleration

Q 3.5 To what extent have hindering factors affected the utilization of the strategic shifts and accelerators in the region?

Finding 17: Operational inefficiencies, accountability issues and spending capacity affect budget execution, and make it difficult to achieve results to attract more funding.

22. There are several effects of operational inefficiencies at regional and country level, including an increase in extension requests in the past year due to slower budget execution, and shifting focus from resource mobilization. There are recent changes that are responsible for these inefficiencies including the ongoing transition to Quantum (a new financial system),

and the recent HR realignment with gaps in transitions between outgoing personnel and their replacements. There are also longstanding issues, especially inadequate operational capacity in country offices, with a seeming ongoing struggle with logistics management. There is also a need to strengthen capacity needs to be strengthened, especially in the light of increasing humanitarian response. They are some exceptional cases with really low capacity of government partners in crisis locations, where commodity supply management is challenging due to the country's resource constraints.

23. There are also delays related to poor planning processes in the organization, described as a recurrent issue, with countries receiving their funding at the end of the first quarter. Delays in receipt of funding cascade into implementation delays and low budget execution. Monthly meetings with Deputy Representatives were established to discuss key performance indicators including budget execution, however, there is still a lack of responsiveness and accountability for monitoring, with some country leaders are more reactive, only reaching out to RO when emergencies arise.

A Forward-Looking Perspective

Reconceptualizing the next Regional Program given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region

4.1 To what extent and how should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program to stay relevant, keep its essence and enhance its impact orientation given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region, as well as internal and external challenges and opportunities?

Finding 18: The likelihood of achieving the three transformative results in the current Regional Program period is low, and the focus for the next Regional Program should be fully optimizing the accelerators, utilizing the new capacity brought onboard in the first half of this Regional Program period. The outstanding work in this region surpasses the expectation of only dealing with unfinished business in the next SP period.

24. The country survey indicated that more than half of the countries in the region are not likely to achieve any of the 3TRs in the current Regional Program period. Only one or two countries are likely to achieve two or three of these result per self-reports. This clearly indicates the need to intensify focus on the 3TRs per the current plan of the three SP's before 2030. Majority (78%) of countries, per the country survey also indicated a continued focus on the 3TRs, optimizing the use of the accelerators/shifts and program quality with the new capacity brought onboard through the realignment processes. There are suggestions for increased focus on certain areas, similar to the accelerators/strategic shifts, but with emphasis on certain aspects. These are detailed in findings 19 to 22 below.

Fig 27. Desire to introduce new accelerators/ shifts
(% of countries)

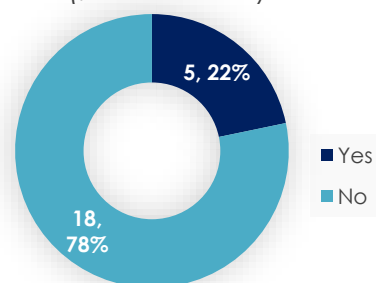
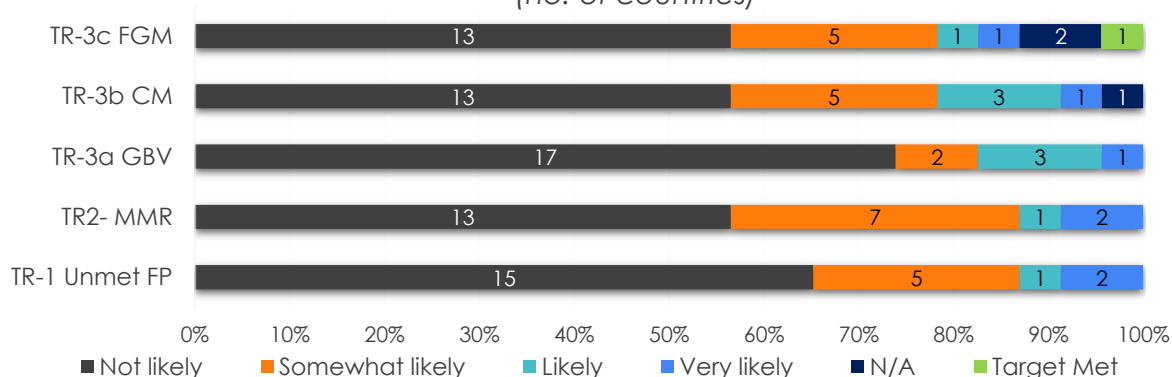


Fig 28. Perceptions on likelihood to achieve the 3TRs
(no. of countries)



Finding 19: Improvements in program design, intervention selection to suit diverse country context, quality of implementation and evidence generation are needed to further accelerate progress.

25. There are several improvements required to strengthen program delivery towards further acceleration of progress on the 3TRs. These include:

- Sharpen programming to focus on the most impactful pathways by questioning program Theories of Change.
- More systematic program design and planning, facilitated by programmatic evidence-based tools for intervention selection to suit diverse country contexts e.g. the new FP strategy and its program design tools. Similar tools should be designed to support the other result areas.
- Strengthen the quality of programming, especially in areas where progress is very slow.
- Strengthen the integration of services (RH/GBV) through mentoring, and digitization of provider training.
- Strengthen financing initiatives, through the development of a financing framework that every CO can use to measure, monitor and maximize government investments in the 3 Transformative Results (3TRs); equity focus of budgets; addressing spending capacity challenges; and enables evidence-based engagement of IFIs, and donors.

26. Further evidence generation efforts are also required, especially for gender transformation, especially in changing harmful social norms and behaviours, understanding intersections e.g. political crisis and climate change, food insecurity, and humanitarian crises. Others emphasized investing in more complex analysis using modelling, creating projections that improve responsiveness of the Regional Program. There is also a need for more granular analysis to better understand the root causes of persisting problematic indices, and to better refine implementation strategies in countries.

Finding 20: Beyond the focus on the 3TRs, amplifying UNFPA’s normative work and increasing joint programming, may need to be considered in the current resource-constrained context.

27. It is time to consider how UNFPA balances micro-interventions and system improvements, as the increasing resource constraints suggest a more strategic technical assistance role, may be more impactful than the current smaller portfolio of service delivery work. UNFPA’s ongoing normative work is already influencing policies, with existing access to high level

stakeholders. This can be further leveraged for the F2FF agenda to influence government budgets towards macro-impact and addressing issues at scale. In addition, an increase in joint global/regional and country programs with UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP and other agencies, where UNFPA prioritizes its technical inputs into these programs and leverages the stronger operational capacity of these agencies and joint advocacy efforts, will maximize the impact of interventions, potentially resulting in institutional, political and social change in supported countries. These collaborations are also described as better positioning and implementing the ICPD agenda.

Finding 21: Programs addressing the 3TRs, are increasingly being implemented in the humanitarian context, requiring further investments in humanitarian capacity, strengthening the HDP nexus and contextualizing programming.

28. There is a gradual increase in humanitarian capacity in the region in both countries facing crises and neighbouring countries who deal with the spill over from the crises. Most countries are dealing with both humanitarian and development contexts in different parts of the country, having to provide both humanitarian response and ongoing development support simultaneously. There is a need for improvements in the humanitarian-development piece, especially building adaptive management which cuts across program management and service delivery. There is also a need to further contextualize programs considering political contexts in the Sahel region e.g. how to program differently with populations on the move.

Finding 22: Scaling up complementary economic empowerment programming through partnerships, towards alleviating poverty, increasing women and youth participation and contributing to sustainable development.

29. There is also a need to further strengthen economic empowerment initiatives, as economic empowerment at the individual and community levels are essential to accelerating results in view of increasing macroeconomic volatility in many countries in the region and food insecurity especially in humanitarian crises contexts. This can be implemented through incorporating complementary poverty reduction strategies linked to addressing the 3TRs, potential through joint programs. Several countries suggested that the next Regional Program includes measures to strengthen women and youth's access to education, decent employment opportunities, professional training and entrepreneurship. In addition, normative work around policies that guarantee gender equality in the workplace, including combating wage discrimination and supporting the reconciliation of paid work and family responsibilities.

Organizational readiness to face future challenges and changes, and fulfil its normative role

4.2 How ready is the organization to face future challenges and changes, and fulfil its normative role, particularly in the context of increasingly complex political and social contexts?

Finding 23: Inadequate human resources in terms of required skills and numbers of personnel is a recurring theme across several shifts/accelerators and their enablers.

30. Several sections of the report have discussed human resource capacity gaps, many of which are already being addressed through the WCARO restructuring and ongoing realignment in country offices, and training of focal points, with the aim to have the right

capacity at all levels to further enhance acceleration. For reference, the key skills/personnel gaps were reported in financing, social norms, humanitarian response, megatrends, advocacy, RM and strategic communication and safety and security.

Finding 24: Regional office support is mostly skewed to traditional areas of work, and somewhat correlates with levels of operationalization of shifts/accelerators, and can be leveraged towards increased acceleration.

31. Amplifications: Strategic shifts described as amplifications (areas where UNFPA is tasked with increasing efforts in areas it is already engaged at program level), are better supported by the regional office, as expected. Scaling SRH, (74% of countries are receiving support: 17% significant support, and 57% some support), and expanding the humanitarian response (83%: 31% significant support, and 52% some support). See Fig 29. Majority of countries have also incorporated and are operationalizing these shifts. See Fig 30. One amplification (UNFPA’s normative role) however shows lower levels of support (57%: 18% significant support, and 39% some support), with a high level of incorporation and operationalization. Qualitative feedback suggests that, even though countries have operationalized this, there are implementation challenges due to capacity constraints, notably policy advocacy expertise, indicative of a need for further support.

Fig 29. Level of WCARO support by accelerator/shift
(no. of countries)

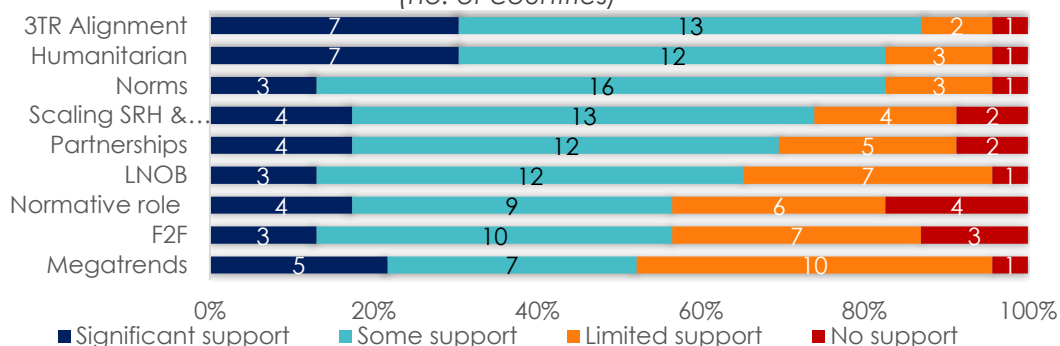
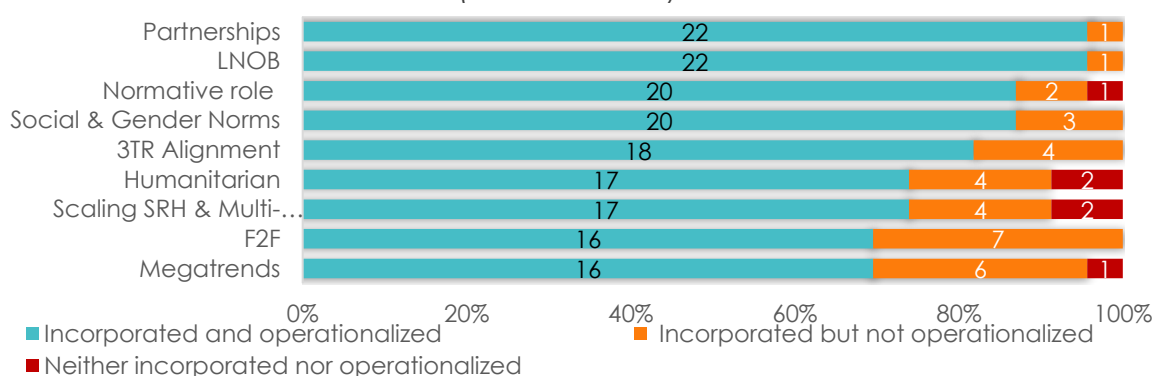


Fig 30. Level of incorporation & operationalization by shift/accelerator
(no. of countries)



32. Adjustments: The two strategic shifts (3TR Alignment and F2FF) in focus for this RPE and classified as Adjustments, showed differences in their levels of operationalization and levels of WCARO support. For 3TRs Alignment, (87% of countries received support: 30% significant support, and 57% some support), whereas for F2FF (57% of countries received support: 13% significant support, and 44% some support). This disparity is also expected as the 3TRs have

been a longstanding area of work, with recent reframing to increase focus on these results, whereas F2FF is a completely new area of work with limited capacity in the region to implement it, and the regional personnel to support this only resumed over 6 months ago.

33. **Accelerators:** Most of the strategic shifts defined as accelerators, and in focus in this RPE (Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, partnerships and LNOB) were indicated by more countries (83%, 69%, 65%), as areas where they received some or significant support, and a large proportion of countries (87%, 96%, 96%) have also incorporated and are implementing these accelerators. However, Integrating the effects of megatrends showed the lowest levels of support from the regional office, where just over half (52%) of countries indicated significant support (22%) or some support (30%); and the lowest level of operationalization with 70% of countries incorporating and operationalizing the shift, 26% that have only incorporated the shift and 4% that have neither incorporated nor operationalized it.

34. The regional office has already set up an annual technical assistance needs assessment and implementation process towards better supporting countries, and this will contribute to organizational readiness. Based on these analyses, there is a clear need to increase support to the following strategic shifts/accelerators: Integrating the effect of megatrends, F2FF, UNFPA's normative role.

Finding 25: There is a gap in UNFPA's organizational positioning as a feminist organization, with opportunities to better reflect this through the Regional Program, the organizational structure and staff capacity.

35. There is a need to better integrate gender equality in the organization as a whole, beyond the programs being implemented, better positioning UNFPA as a feminist organization, including its organizational systems, structures and processes. There is also a need for value clarification of staff to increase their confidence working in the human rights space, as well as changing strategies on how women and women organizations are engaged with an increasing focus on empowerment, than tokenistic engagements. In a sense, calling for the organization to "practice what it preaches."

Finding 26: Improvements in operational processes are also needed, ranging from planning, through budget monitoring to knowledge management.

36. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of technical officers to monitor budgets, as they are responsible for execution and have better visibility of resource allocation and utilization. Also, each technical expert responsible of managing non-core resources at RO should also maintain close working relationships with their focal point a HQ, to ensure arising matters are dealt with promptly. This will enable early action on low spending and timely application for no-cost extensions if needed, preventing loss of funds returned to donors unutilized. A standardized KM system as discussed earlier, also needs to be put in place to enhance operational efficiency.

Annex 6. Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question and Sub-Question	Indicators (See Evidence Database-Annex 11)	Sources / Methods / Tools
Strategic Shifts (Accelerators, Amplifications and Adjustments) Operationalization		
EQ1: To what extent have the strategic shifts been clearly defined and operationalized in the Regional Program, and supported the achievement of 3TRs and ICPD PoA priorities at regional and country level?		
1.1 To what extent are the Regional Program and Country Programs systematically aligning their focus to achieving the 3TRs	Evidence of a clear shift in programming that is indicative of an alignment of focus on achieving the 3TRs.	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.2 To what extent are the Regional Program and Country Programs focusing systematically and coherently on “populations left behind”?	Evidence of a clear understanding and operationalization of the reaching those furthest behind first accelerator	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.3 To what extent are the discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities being addressed in the Regional Program ?	Evidence of a clear definition, and utilization of human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches, including for social norm change	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (C) Deep Dives (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.4 To what extent are the effects of megatrends, particularly but not limited to population dynamics, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, climate change, insecurity, incorporated in the Regional Program and Country programming?	Evidence of: ● Comprehensive analytics and research with regard to mega trends in the region ● Coherent and responsive programming/shift in programming relevant to accommodate these trends	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.5 To what extent has the Regional Program expanded humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus programming in the region ?	Evidence of: ● WCARO scaling up UNFPA humanitarian response action ● Examples of successful HDP programming efforts in the region	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (C) Deep Dives (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.6 To what extent and under which conditions have Regional Program regional and country partnerships accelerated progress on 3TRs and the ICPD PoA in the region?	Evidence of increasing trends in relevant, diversified and impactful partnerships, including SSTC	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey

1.7 Have the regional and country Programs scaled up the provision of high-quality, human rights focused comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, and multi-sectoral response to GBV in the region	Evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WCARO scaling up comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services ● Increase in multi-sectoral response partnerships to address GBV 	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.8 To what extent has WCARO played and supported a stronger normative role for UNFPA in the region ?	Evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A common understanding of UNFPA’s normative role ● A shift in modes of engagement from operational activities for development to normative work 	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
1.9 To what extent has the Regional Program embraced the funding to funding and financing (F2FF) agenda to accelerate progress towards the transformative results ?	Evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A common understanding of the funding to funding and financing (F2FF) agenda among UNFPA regional and country office staff ● Increased financing for achieving the transformative results within the region, thanks to UNFPA 	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey

Enablers

EQ2: What are the enablers to operationalizing the shifts, and to what extent have they facilitated acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program ?

2.1 To what extent has strategic communication facilitated WCARO's efforts to operationalize the accelerators and strategic shifts in the region?	Evidence that changes in strategic communication have supported the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
2.2 To what extent has KM facilitated WCARO's efforts to operationalize the accelerators and strategic shifts in the region?	Evidence that changes in KM have supported the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
2.3 To what extent have human resource strategies and management supported the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?	Evidence of that human resource strategies and management have supported the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
2.4 How can efforts to implement the strategic shifts and accelerators be further strengthened? What other enablers have supported the operationalization of the accelerators in the region? What opportunities exist to better use these enablers?	Evidence of specific facilitating factors for the implementation of each of the specific shifts/accelerators in focus	(B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey

Barriers		
EQ3: What are the inhibiting factors, and to what extent have they limited the acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program ?		
3.1 To what extent has inadequate human capital hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?	Evidence that gaps in human capital have hindered the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
3.2 To what extent have geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?	Evidence that geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure have hindered the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
3.3 To what extent has poor safety and security in the region hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?	Evidence that poor safety and security in the region have hindered the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
3.4 To what extent has limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region?	Evidence that limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support have hindered the implementation of the accelerators and strategic shifts	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies
3.5 To what extent have hindering factors affected the utilization of the strategic shifts and accelerators in the region?	Evidence of specific hindering factors for each of the specific shifts and accelerators in focus.	(B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
Forward Looking Perspective		
EQ4: To what extent should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region?		
4.1 To what extent and how should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program to stay relevant, keep its essence and enhance its impact orientation given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region, as well as internal and external challenges and opportunities?	The combined evidence-base from EQ1, 2 and 3 will support findings in this section, in addition to expert/key informant opinions.	(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey
4.2 How ready is the organization to face future challenges and changes, and fulfil its normative role, particularly in the context of increasingly complex political and social contexts?		(A) Document Review (B) Key Informant Interviews (D) Country Level Studies (E) Country Survey

Annex 7: Detailed Methodology

1. RPEs are primarily intended to review progress of the current Regional Program Action Plan (Regional Program) and inform the development of subsequent Regional Programs. In this cycle, the RPE will also contribute to the global SPE, and has been aligned by design (ToRs and evaluation questions adapted from SPE to the Regional Program context), and through implementation phases (coordinated SPE-RPE working relationships and timelines), with the aim of creating synergies and efficiencies. The RPE also enabled a deeper dive into critical issues identified in the region, in comparison to the SPE, thus still serving its core purpose of responding to assessing the specificities of the regional Program, and its diverse country contexts.

2. The planned methodological approach was informed by the RPE ToR, consultative meetings with the WCARO evaluation manager and the SPE team; as well as a targeted document review. The approach was aligned to the global SPE framework, but with a focus on regional specifics, especially through a proposed region-wide survey, the country's selected for missions and the deep dive topics.

3. The evaluation theorized that clearly defined and operationalized strategic shifts/accelerators will accelerate the achievement of UNFPA's results including the six strategic plan outputs, three transformative results, and the overall goal of UNFPA, recognizing potential variations in relevance of the different strategic shifts in the region and the different country contexts.

Design and Data Collection

4. This formative evaluation combined an inductive/adaptive approach⁸² with elements of a deductive theory-based approach.⁸³

- **Formative:** Focused on learning, with an open, reflective and adaptive mindset, understanding what works and what does not and why, with respect to the optimization of UNFPA's resources and relationships, as well as identifying relevant and effective strategy adaptations, to achieve its goals.
- **Hybrid (inductive and deductive) approach:** The Regional Program was the basis for the evaluation. The evaluation assessed the operationalization of the strategic shifts/accelerators that were clearly pre-defined in the Regional Program . In addition, the evaluation process was also adaptive, and explored new issues and ideas emerging in an inductive manner during stakeholder engagement and data collection, including changes in how the strategic shifts have been defined and operationalized.

5. The evaluation was conducted using **mixed-methods**. Due to the timing of this evaluation happening at the mid-point of the Regional Program 2022-2025, there was increased emphasis on collecting primary source data.

- The collection of primary data was prioritized through a **regional survey of all 23 countries in the region; targeted key informant interviews** (with UNFPA key informants across

⁸² An adaptive evaluation typically builds hypotheses from field-based interactions, emphasizes learning over testing, advocates open-mindedness with techniques, and appreciates the value of dialogue and participation in navigating complex processes

⁸³ A theory-based evaluation approach can be used to identify indicators that are meaningful, feasible, and appropriate for the program being evaluated. This type of evaluation allows the evaluator to probe deeper into the components of a program and determine what is working, what is not working, and why.

WCARO, Country Offices and Business Units in Headquarters (HQ), and comparator” agencies at regional level); **FGDs with select country representatives and deputy representatives and regional social and gender norms experts** as well as **select country missions**.

- These were complemented by a **document review of secondary sources**. The range of data collection methods included previous and current Strategic Plan and Regional Program; strategic, corporate and programmatic documents; MTR survey results; and evaluative evidence from regional/country evaluations; and the eight acceleration papers that analyse bottlenecks and identify priority focus areas at regional and country level.
- Further, all data sources were utilized to develop a **deep-dive analysis⁸⁴ of priority challenges** for the organization in the region; with a focus on strategic shifts/accelerators that are targeting areas where progress has been slower/ more challenging (Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms, and Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity).

6. The evaluation was **participatory and utilization focused**, originating from UNFPA’s quadrennial Budgeted Evaluation Plan 2022-2025 at the request of the Executive Board, to provide evidence to influence the design of the next UNFPA strategic plan 2026 – 2029. This indicates pre-existing inherent value to the organization’s leadership. This evaluation also emphasized a strong stakeholder engagement focus throughout the life of the RPE, from design to dissemination, with key stakeholders involved at different stages. Early consultations shaped the focus of this RPE, to meet user’s learning needs, and preliminary findings were discussed with both the ERG and the Regional Office, as well as a co-creation workshop that further informed comprehensive analysis and co-creation of recommendations.

Description of Data Collection Methods & Tools

7. The data collection methods have been aligned to evaluation questions and sub-questions, as detailed in the full evaluation matrix ([see Annex 6](#)). The methods, their corresponding evidence sources/areas of focus are detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Methods and Evidence Sources/ Focus Areas

Sources/Focus Area	Description
Document review	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key documents related to the Strategic Plan /Regional Program 2022-2025 • Regional, sub-regional and country-level annual reports • Midterm review and data • Evaluative evidence from corporate, regional and key thematic evaluations. • Administrative data, including data on human and financial resources • Relevant regional and country publications related to contexts, trends, specific topics 	Document reviews started in the inception phase and continued through the data collection phase.

⁸⁴ Deep Dive is a method where an individual or team conducts an intense, in-depth analysis of a certain problem or subject. A deep dive analysis has been recorded as 'a strategy of immersing a team rapidly into a situation, to provide solutions or create ideas. Deep dive analysis will normally focus in areas such as process, organization, leadership and culture.

Key Informant interviews

- UNFPA key informants at the regional level
 - Key informants at country level (UNFPA, Partners, IPs, CSOs)
 - UNFPA key informants at headquarters
 - Key informants in comparator UN entities
- These internal and external interviews were conducted with 42 key informants and FGD participants across the different stakeholder categories, and about 40 key informants in each country mission.

Deep dives

- 2 critical subjects identified as challenges:
 1. Transformation of social and gender norms;
 2. Humanitarian preparedness and response and HDP nexus;
- Based on the ToRs and the inception consultation, the evaluation team identified these two areas from accelerators /strategic shifts that represent priority challenges for UNFPA WCARO.

Country level studies

- Country level survey
 - 2 country missions (1 development context country and 1 humanitarian-development context country)
 - Country evaluations
- All 23 countries participated in a country level survey. 2 countries were studied in detail through these country level studies, examining the different contexts and lessons learnt on the relevance and operationalization of the strategic shifts and associated factors, identifying country specifics on “what does/did not work”, and the changes needed.
-

Country Selection for Country Level Studies

9. The RPE approach for country selection for country level studies, took into consideration several key criteria to enable a selection of countries that represent diverse contexts; as well as a balance between examining priority challenges and successes in line with the evaluation objectives. In addition, the team excluded countries where recent deep dives had been implanted and those already part of the ongoing country missions/desk reviews by the SPE.

10. Key selection characteristics include:

- 1) A country with CPD developed alongside the SP development process, and another with the CPD developed prior to the SP. CPDs developed alongside the SP development process are expected to reflect the priorities and approaches as outlined in the SP better, the overarching goals and objectives of prior SPs have been very similar, with some differentiation in organization/phrasing
- 2) Countries in different tiers based on the SP classification. It is expected that there will be a variation in the use of accelerators and strategic shifts in the different tiers
 - o Tier I countries have not achieved any of the 3TRs/have attained none
 - o Tier II countries have not attained 2 of the 3TRs/have attained 1
 - o Tier III countries have not attained 1 of the 3TRs/have attained 2
- 3) A largely development context country, and another that straddles both humanitarian and development contexts where the HDP Nexus can be examined.
- 4) Program expenditure, represented as the indicative RR allocation at the time of CP approval, with countries categorized into three groups (<USD 3m, USD 3m-10m, and >USD

10m). The final countries selected, after the best fit for all the criteria was considered, ended up in the same allocation bracket.

5) Income Status , with countries classified as LIC, LMIC or UMIC

6) Language, One Francophone and One Anglophone country for representativeness

11. The team also considered additional criteria below, also used in the SPE, however almost all countries in the region fell within the same category.

7) Countries in different tiers based on the SP classification. It is expected that there will be a variation in the use of accelerators and strategic shifts in the different tiers. **Only one country in WCA falls outside Tier I.**

8) Total Fertility Rate, with TFRs drawn from the State of the World’s Population Report 2022, and countries categorised as above or below the replacement rate of 2.1. **All countries in the region are above the replacement rate.**

12. Based on the above criteria, the two countries selected for the RPE country missions are Mali and Ghana. The evaluation however expects to leverage the data from the ongoing country case studies by the SPE team in Nigeria and Chad. See country characteristics based on the selection criteria in Table 1 below.

Table 8: Mission Countries by selection criteria

West & Central Africa Region		CPD approved Sept 2022 or after	CPD approved before June 2021
Development vs Humanitarian-programming	Development Humanitarian- Development	Ghana, Nigeria, Chad	Mali
National income 2021	LIC LMIC UMIC	Chad Nigeria, Ghana	Mali
Language	Francophone Anglophone	Chad, Nigeria, Ghana	Mali
Program Expenditure (CPD Regular Resources)*	<USD 3m USD 3m-10m >USD 10m	Nigeria, Chad, Ghana	Mali
UNFPA prioritisation*	TIER I TIER II TIER III	Chad, Nigeria, Ghana,	Mali,
Total Fertility Rate*	At or above replacement rate Below replacement	Nigeria, Chad, Ghana,	Mali

*Criteria assessed but not relevant to the WCARO context

Description of Data Analysis & Synthesis Methods

13. The analysis plan for this RPE comprised both a deductive and inductive thematic approach to analyse primary qualitative data, in line with the evaluation approach. The analysis assessed known factors, and identified additional factors and underlying patterns

that will increase understanding of the dynamics in operationalizing the strategic shifts, from the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders. Qualitative analysis supported the interpretation of quantitative data, and subsequently the synthesis of conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations. Quantitative data analysis was largely descriptive analysis of primary data from country surveys.

14. Data was analysed by evaluation question, with different sources triangulated to ensure the robustness and validity of evidence. Preliminary analysis findings were reviewed via in-depth joint analysis and learning sessions with Regional Office staff to further strengthen the evidence-base and validity of findings, elicit additional findings, co-create key recommendations and discuss forward-looking perspectives. Relevant findings from the RPE were also shared with the SPE team to inform the SPE report.

15. An evidence database was used to collate evidence across the RPE during data collection. The evidence database serves as a comprehensive source of all evidence that informed the RPE analysis and reporting, increasing transparency, accountability and confidence in the evaluation process and findings. The evidence database mirrors sections of the evaluation matrix, with data sources (key informant/ document) in rows and evaluation questions in columns. All relevant data collected across methods was systematically recorded in the appropriate column.

Coordination with the Strategic Evaluation Team

16. As a result of the dual purpose of this evaluation, the RPE team worked in close coordination with the SPE team, and other RPE teams. The close coordination allowed leveraging of evaluation tools, processes, guidelines and outputs as is feasible; regular dialogue to enhance cross-learning throughout the evaluation process, and prevent duplication and inefficiencies.

Annex 8: Summary Terms of Reference

Subject of the evaluation

1. The Evaluation Office will conduct a formative evaluation of UNFPA's organizational readiness and strategic positioning to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the three transformative results as articulated in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Effort will be taken to ensure complementary and synergy with the on-going mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the WCA Regional Program Action Plan (Regional Program) 2022-2025.

Purpose

2. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence to support UNFPA WCARO's learning related to what works (and what does not) to accelerate progress towards achievement of the transformative results and inform the design of the next Strategic Plan and its stated intent to focus on "unfinished business". This WCARO formative evaluation is a milestone within the SP 'evaluative evidence package' to inform the three strategic plans, which are intended to build a foundation, accelerate progress towards achieving the three transformative results.

Objectives

3. The objective of this evaluation is to assess UNFPA WCARO's organizational readiness and strategic positioning to accelerate the progress towards the achievement of the three transformative results and catalyse a discussion on the design of the next Strategic Plan given the state of progress on the SDGs. New elements introduced in this Strategic Plan will be the focus – namely, the six accelerators for change - and the strategic shifts that were proposed, including flexibility and agility in programming, financing, innovation and partnerships.

Scope

4. The evaluation will focus on the current Strategic Plan period starting in 2022 until the end of data collection in mid-year 2024. A forward-looking perspective will be maintained so that the evaluation results will benefit both the remainder of the current Strategic Plan and the development of the subsequent one.

Users

5. The primary intended users of the evaluation are: (i) UNFPA WCA Regional Office and (ii) WCA Country Offices, (iii) UNFPA senior management; (iv) the UNFPA Policy and Strategy Division; (v) the UNFPA Technical Division; (vi) the UNFPA Humanitarian Office; and (vii) UNFPA business units at headquarters. The results of the evaluation should also be of interest to a wider group of stakeholders, such as UNFPA Executive Board members and other UN organizations.

Methodological approach

6. The evaluation will be theory-based with aspects of an adaptive/developmental approach. The use of mixed-methods will ensure that a broad range of data – both quantitative and qualitative – are examined. The evaluation will carry out the following data collection, at a minimum (see section G. Evaluation Process for more information):

- Desk review of key documents related to the previous and current Strategic Plan and Regional Program;
- Desk review of strategic, corporate and programmatic documents;
- Review of MTR survey data and evidence from audits;
- Synthesis of evaluative evidence from corporate, regional and country evaluations;
- Missions to selected country offices;
- Interviews with UNFPA key informants across divisions, units and offices at global, regional and country levels;
- Interviews with “comparator” agencies – primarily UN;
- Deep-dive analyses on priority challenges for the organization and/or areas where the existing evaluative evidence base is particularly weak.

Evaluation questions

7. The questions related to the strategic shifts will be prioritized and reduced during the inception phase following discussions with key stakeholders and based on areas identified through the MTR as key challenges.

Table 9: Evaluation questions and criteria in ToR

Evaluation questions	Evaluation Criteria			
	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency
Forward-looking perspective				
i. To what extent should UNFPA reconceptualize the next Regional Program given the state of progress towards the SDGs and 3TRs in the region?	X			
Accelerators				
iii. To what extent have each of the six accelerators been clearly defined and operationalized in the Regional Program and supported achievement of 3TRs and ICPD PoA priorities in countries within the region? What have been the enabling and inhibiting factors?		X	X	
iv. To what extent is each of the accelerators has been operationalized into programming at regional and country-levels? What have been the enabling and inhibiting factors?				
Strategic Shifts				
vi. To what extent are the effects of megatrends, particularly of population dynamics particularly urbanization, displacement and migrations; food insecurity, climate change, security, digitalization etc, is, being incorporated in the Regional Program?		X		
vii. To what extent is Regional Program focusing on “populations left behind” and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first”?			X	

viii.	To what extent has Regional Program scaled up the provision of high-quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services and multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence in the region?			X	
ix.	To what extent has Regional Program expanded humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming in the region?			X	
xi.	To what extent are the discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities, being addressed in the Regional Program?			X	
xiii.	To what extent has UNFPA's normative role been strengthened?				
xiv.	To what extent has the Regional Program focus shifted from funding to funding and financing the ICPD agenda in the region?				X
xv.	To what extent Regional Program partnerships accelerated progress on 3TRs and ICPD PoA in the region?				
xvii.	To what extent has strategic communication facilitated the acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Regional Program ?				
xviii.	To what extent has human resource strategies and management facilitated the acceleration and strategic shifts foreseen in the Strategic Plan?				

Governance

8. *The evaluation manager.* The evaluation manager will have overall responsibility for the management of the evaluation process, including hiring and managing the (team of) external consultant(s). The evaluation manager is responsible for ensuring the quality and independence of the evaluation (in line with UNEG Norms, Standards and Ethical Guidelines).

9. The *Regional Director* will approve the selection of the Evaluation team, as well as the inception and evaluation reports.

10. The *Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor* will play an important role in facilitating the regional evaluation component. They will assist in the selection and hiring of a regional consultant, facilitate the work of the regional consultant and evaluation team members carrying out country missions/desk reviews, and quality assure regional deliverables.

11. The *evaluation reference group.* The conduct of the evaluation will be followed closely by an evaluation reference group consisting of staff members of UNFPA and select external members. The internal reference group will play a key role in ensuring access to information and individuals, as well as reviewing draft deliverables.

Evaluation Timeline

Table 10: Evaluation Timeline

Evaluation Phase	Timeline	RPE Timeline	SPE Timeline
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1	Preparatory phase	October 2023		
	Draft concept note	- January		
	Internal consultations	2024		
	Drafting of terms of reference Procurement			
2	Inception phase		October –	
	Inception workshop	April 2023	December	
	Draft inception report		2023	
	Pilot country mission Final inception report			
3	Data collection phase	May-July 2024	January-April 2024	February – October 2023
4	Analysis and Synthesis	August 2024	May 2024	November 2023 – January 2024
5	Reporting and review	Sept.-Oct 2024	June – Sept. 2024	February – March 2024
	Draft final report			
	Final report Executive Board paper to the Executive Board secretariat			
6	Management response and dissemination	February 2025	February 2025	June 2024
	Presentation to the Executive Board Dissemination of the report			

Evaluation Team – Bios

12. **Lola Aladesanmi (Evaluation Team Leader)** is a development specialist with over two decades of experience in strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation of international health and social development policies across West, East, and Southern Africa. As the CEO of BroadImpact, she leads large multi-country evaluations of public health and social development programs in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. She holds a Master of Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and a PhD in Public Health.

13. **Natalia Conesta (Humanitarian Evaluator)** is a Senior Public Health Expert with over 30 years of global experience in research, gender, education, and skills development. She has led numerous health and treatment projects, focusing on enhancing project readiness and management capacity, and have extensive experience with donors, and various UN and bilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Global Fund, working in diverse countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. She holds a Master in Public Health (Primary Health Care Management), a PhD in Epidemiology, and an MBA in Management of International Organizations.

14. **Maimouna Bah (Young and Emerging Evaluator)** is a global health professional with over five years of experience in research, evaluation, and program management. She previously evaluated programs on sexual reproductive health, and health system strengthening with the ALIMA NGO and the French Agency for Development. She holds two Master's degrees in Health Policy and Global Health Law from the University of Paris and Georgetown Law.

Annex 9: Persons Interviewed

Interview Type	Respondents
Global KIIs	1. Global Program Coordinator
	2. Human Rights Advisor, Gender & Human Rights Branch
	3. Chief, Gender & Human Rights Branch
	4. Health Financing Specialist, Family Planning Branch
	5. Deputy Global Coordinator GBV AoR, Humanitarian Response Division
	6. M&E and Reporting Specialist, Fundraising Unit, Humanitarian Response Division
Regional- Internal KIIs	7. Deputy Regional Director WCARO
	8. SWEDD Director
	9. Resource Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships Technical Advisor
	10. Communication & Media Specialist
	11. Regional Program Coordinator
	12. Program Management specialist
	13. Program Specialist
	14. Humanitarian Advisor
	15. Family Planning and Program Policy Advisor
	16. MH/HSS Advisor
	17. Social Policy and Health Economics Advisor
	18. Intl Operations Manager (IOM)
	19. Program Associate
	20. Knowledge Management Specialist
	21. Senior Human Resource Business Partner
Regional- Internal Participants FGD: Social & Gender Norms Experts	22. Regional Gender and Human Rights Advisor (UNFPA RO)
	23. Harmful Practices and Social Norms Specialist (UNFPA RO)
Regional- External KIIs	24. Regional Adviser on Child Protection for West and Central Africa (UNICEF)
	25. Gender in Humanitarian Action Coordinator (UN WOMEN)
	26. West Africa Strategic Development and Partnerships Manager (EquiPop)
	27. Advocacy Unit Manager (EquiPop)
	28. Head of Evaluation, Learning and Data Analytics (Tostan)
	29. SRHR/HIV Program Coordinator (WAHO)
	30. Senior Research Manager (Ouagadougou Partnership)
	31. Director - Public Health Research (Regional Institute of Population Studies)
	32. Regional Adviser on Child Protection for West and Central Africa (UNICEF RO)
Regional- External FGD Social & Gender Norms Experts	33. Child Protection Specialist (UNICEF RO)
	34. Senior Technical Adviser (CSO-CISP)
	35. Senior Adviser, Strategy and Programs (Tostan)

Interview Type	Respondents
Country Level- Internal Participants FGD: Social & Gender Norms Experts	36. Program Coordinator, Gender, GBV and FGM (UNFPA Mali) 37. Program Manager (UNFPA Niger)
Country Level- Internal FGD: Reps and Deputy Reps	38. Deputy Representative (CAR) 39. Resident Representative (Niger) 40. Country Representative (Guinea EQ) 41. Deputy Representative (Cameroon) 42. Deputy Representative (Chad) 43. Country Representative (Gambia) 44. Country Representative (Benin) 45. Representant Assistant (Congo) 46. Deputy Regional Director (UNFPA RO)
Country Level- External Participants FGD: Social & Gender Norms Experts	47. Director, Programs and Admin (CSO Nigeria – One life Initiative) 48. Communication Specialist (UNICEF Burkina Faso)
Country Mission- Mali Internal Participants	1. Country Director 2. Deputy Representative 3. Humanitarian Coordinator 4. Monitoring and evaluation specialist 5. Project Coordinator, SRHR/GBV 6. Maternal Health Program Specialist 7. Health Specialist 8. Coordinator Gender/GBV/FGM 9. Youth Reproductive Health Program Officer 10. Reproductive Health Products Security Program Officer 11. Program Manager GBV in Emergencies 12. Emergency Reproductive Health Program Officer 13. GBV AoR Coordinator 14. GBVIMS Coordinator 15. International Operations Manager 16. Chef Bureau Mopti 17. Chef Bureau Gao. Manager BHA project 18. Chef Bureau Menaka 19. Chef Bureau Timbuktu
Country Mission- Mali External Participants	1. Development Coordination Officer, Economist (UN-RCO) 2. Deputy Representative (UNICEF) 3. Head of office/Deputy (OCHA) 4. Director - NGO AGIR 5. Country Director of Marie Stop International Mali

Interview Type	Respondents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Executive Director of the Malian Association for Family Protection and Promotion (AMPPF) 7. Executive Director of the Association of Support for the Development of Population Activities (ASDAP) 8. Program Manager for the Malian Association for the Monitoring and Guidance of Traditional Practices (AMSOPT) 9. President of the Network for Women in Law and Development (WILDAF) 10. Acting Head of Mission of International Emergency and Development Aid (IEDA) 11. National Coordinator of Tostan Mali 12. Country Director of International Medical Corps (IMC) 13. Manager of HELP (Hilfe Zur Selbsthilfe) 14. President of AMSODE
Country Mission- Ghana Internal Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Program Analyst 2. AYSRH Unit 3. Procurement Assistant 4. M&E Specialist 5. Program Assistant 6. Deputy Representative 7. Driver 8. Program Management 9. NPA P&D 10. ICT ASRH 11. Consultant 12. National Program Analyst 13. Finance Assistant 14. Program Assistant Reproductive Health 15. National Program Analyst 16. Gender Analyst 17. Personal Assistant to the Rep 18. ICT Associate 19. Finance Assistant 20. Operations Assistant 21. Program Specialist 22. Admin Assistant 23. Procurement Unit 24. Fellow 25. Prog Assistant 26. HR assistant 27. Program Analyst 28. Virtual Participant 29. Virtual Participant

Interview Type	Respondents
Country Mission- Ghana External Participants	1. Program Coordinator of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG)
	2. Child Protection Specialist (UNICEF)
	3. Director General of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
	4. IP Focal Person (NPDC)
	5. Technical Adviser (NPDC)
	6. Program Policy Officer for Gender and Youth Inclusion (WFP)
	7. Executive Director (POS Foundation)
	8. Head of Family Planning Program, FHD/UNFPA focal point (Ghana Health Service)
	9. IP Program Focal Person for the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP))
	10. Program Officer (MoGCSP)
	11. Program Officer (MoGCSP)
	12. Head of Corporate Communication & Brand Mgt (Access Bank)
	13. Program Officer (Global Affairs Canada)
	14. Director (Ministry of Finance)
	15. IP Focal Point/Program for UNFPA (Volta Regional Coordinating Council)
	16. IP Focal Person (Program), Bono East Regional Coordinating Council
	17. Director, Nursing and Midwifery (Ministry of Health)
	18. Midwife (Ministry of Health)
	19. Executive Director (PAYDP)

Annex 10: Documents Reviewed

- 1) UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, Annex 4: Global and regional Programs, 7. West and Central Africa regional Program
- 2) Accelerations Papers
 - a. Acceleration Paper 1_Strategic Foresight
 - b. Acceleration Paper 2_Zero preventable maternal death
 - c. Acceleration Paper 3_Zero unmet need for FP
 - d. Acceleration Paper 4_Zero GBV harmful practices
 - e. Acceleration Paper 5_Innovation
 - f. Acceleration Paper 6_Data
 - g. Acceleration Paper 7_Demographic dividend
 - h. Acceleration Paper 8_Humanitarian Acceleration
- 3) WCARO Annual Reports (2023)
- 4) West and Central Africa - 2022-2025 SP office MTR implementation survey
- 5) Midterm Review Strategic Plan Integrated Budget 2022-2025
- 6) Analysis of the TA provided by the WCARO to the 23 country offices – April 2024
- 7) Financial WCARO budgets
- 8) ED Reports
- 9) West and Central Africa Region Update – July 2024
- 10) Presentation to the Evaluation Reference Group Meeting - 26 May 2024
- 11) Draft 1 SPE Report
- 12) Ghana - Country visit
 - a. 2023 Evaluation report: Joint Evaluation of phase II (2020–2023) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Program to End Child Marriage
 - b. March 2024 - Final Evaluation Of The United Nations Joint Program On Empowering Adolescent Girls Through Improved Access To Reproductive Health Education And Rights-Based Quality Sexual And Reproductive Health Services In Ghana
 - c. 2022 Annual Report – Ghana
 - d. 2023 Annual Report - Ghana
- 13) Mali – Country Visit
 - a. UNFPA Program Mali CPD8 2019-2024
 - b. 2024 Presentation to the Executive Board: UNFPA Mali - Implementing the Nexus approach for durable solutions
 - c. Organizational chart
 - d. Mali BHA Application template 2024
 - e. 2023 Presentation - Mali Humanitarian Preparedness: A look back.
- 14) Evaluation Handbook - 2024 Edition
- 15) 2024 Guidance on evaluation quality assurance and assessment

Annex 11: Evaluation Reference Groups & Management Group ToR

Management and Governance

The responsibility for the management and supervision of the evaluation will rest with the Regional Office (WCARO).

The Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Manager

The evaluation manager will have overall responsibility for the management of the evaluation process, including hiring and managing the (team of) external consultant(s). The evaluation manager is responsible for ensuring the quality and independence of the evaluation (in line with UNEG Norms, Standards and Ethical Guidelines). The Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Manager will play an important role in facilitating the regional evaluation. She will assist in the selection and hiring of regional consultants, facilitate their work, facilitate selection of countries for field missions, and assure the quality of regional deliverables.

The Evaluation Reference Group

The conduct of the evaluation will be followed closely by an evaluation reference group consisting of staff members of UNFPA from the Regional Office and Country Office and select external key regional partners. The internal reference group will play a key role in ensuring access to information and individuals, as well as reviewing draft deliverables. Specifically, the responsibilities of the reference group are to:

- provide feedback and comments on the draft terms of reference of the evaluation;
- act as the interface between the evaluators and the UNFPA services (in headquarters, regional and country offices), notably to facilitate access to informants and documentation;
- participate in review meetings with the evaluation team as required;
- provide feedback and comments on the draft inception report;
- provide comments and substantive feedback from a technical perspective on the draft and final evaluation reports;
- assist in identifying external stakeholders to be consulted during the evaluation process; and,
- play a key role in disseminating evidence and learning from the evaluation, contributing to disseminating the results of the evaluation as well as to the completion and follow-up of the management response.

Ethics and Quality Assurance

The RPE will be implemented in the context of the three quality principles of an evaluation: i) independence and impartiality; ii) credibility and iii) utility. The RPE team will adhere to ethical standards and exercise the highest degree of professionalism, impartiality and objectivity. The team will secure the informed consent of participants prior to all data collection activities. RPE processes will also ensure anonymity of participants, confidentiality of information and respect of people's right not to engage, throughout the evaluation.

Quality assurance processes will also be implemented throughout all the evaluation phases. This will be led by the EM, and will be implemented using the UNFPA EQAA system.⁸⁵ A quality

⁸⁵ <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/evaluation-quality-assurance-and-assessment-tools-and-guidance>

assessment will also take place after the evaluation is completed, with the final evaluation report quality assessed by an independent external assessor.

In an effort to ensure the basis for a high-quality evaluation, UNFPA management needs and expectations were clarified during the inception phase of the evaluation process. In addition, the evaluation also has a number of quality assurance elements built into the design. This includes:

- The RPE team meets regularly to review progress and coordinates with the EM for guidance and clarification when necessary.
- The RPE team liaises with the SPE team to ensure alignment, high quality inputs, assess any relevant issues and concerns, and mainstream constant learning into the process as a quality factor.
- The RPE team provides regular updates on the status of conducting the evaluation to the ERG and raises any issues that may impede the conduct.
- The RPE team and EM ensure sufficient time has been allocated for review of key deliverables.

Annex 12: Ethical Principles

The RPE team adhered to ethical standards, and exercised the highest degree of professionalism, impartiality and objectivity throughout the evaluation. The team applied the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, by maintaining integrity through a robust and transparent data collection process that produced credible results, with an evidence database submitted as an Annex of the report. The team ensured accountability by delivering on evaluation activity commitments, ensuring confidentiality of both participant interactions and their data, and responsiveness to questions or adaptations needed throughout the RPE. The team also displayed respect for all stakeholders ensuring dignity and personal agency in engagement, irrespective of sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability. Lastly, the team assessed any risks to participants associated with the evaluation especially around maintaining confidentiality and mitigated against this through anonymization of participants and discarding recordings or other data collection tools that may bear identifying information on completion of the report.

Annex 13: Data Collection Tools

There are two data collection tools in this annex, they include:

- Country Survey
- KII Questionnaire Protocol and Guide

Country Survey⁸⁶

Introduction

This survey is being carried out as part of the Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA WCA Regional Programme 2022-2025 (RPAP). The evaluation is conducted in conjunction with the Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan (SP) 2022-2025 being undertaken globally by the SP Evaluation Team. We are an independent team of consultants doing an external evaluation for UNFPA. The team comprises:

- Lola Aladesanmi, Team Leader
- Natalia Conesta, Humanitarian Evaluator
- Maimouna Bah, Young & Emerging Evaluator

This survey aims to gather feedback/inputs from the country offices on how the RPAP has been operationalized by WCARO to support your Country Programme results and address country priorities.

It specifically focuses on key elements of the Strategic Plan (SP) and the RPAP, namely strategic shifts, accelerators and enablers that together are envisioned to accelerate progress toward achievement of the UNFPA three transformative results (3TR) and the ICPD Plan of Action (PoA). As a formative evaluation, the intent is not to measure achievements but to gather learning from the ground on what works and does not work. Thus there are no right and wrong answers.

Please fill this survey questionnaire as a country team. The responses should reflect the group's collective assessment of the status of the Country Programme design and implementation relative to the RPAP. We encourage participation of staff members from different thematic areas and those who are based at the sub-national level.

Should you have any questions about filling up this questionnaire, please feel free to send a message to the Evaluation Team (see email addresses below).

Please submit the completed survey form on/before 20 April, 2024 to Maimouna: baldebah@unfpa.org, with copy to Natalia: conesta@unfpa.org, and Lola: aladesanmi@unfpa.org

Thank you for your kind support and cooperation,

The RPE Team

⁸⁶ This tool was adapted from the APRO RPE

Section 1: Profile

1. Country Office:	
2. Years covered by the current Country Programme:	
3. Date:	
4. List persons who participated in filling up the questionnaire below:	

Name (Optional)	Position	Programme Area	Sex	Length of time in current position

Section 2: The Three Transformative Results

3TRs	
Q1. How likely is it that the targets for the transformative results will be met within the current Country Programme (CP), which fully or partially overlaps with the RPAP 2022-2025?	
Zero Unmet need for contraception	<input type="checkbox"/> Target has been met before the RPAP timeframe <input type="checkbox"/> Very likely <input type="checkbox"/> Likely <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat likely <input type="checkbox"/> Not likely <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable to the country
Zero Maternal Mortality	
Zero Gender- Based Violence	
Zero Harmful Practices: Child marriage	
Zero Harmful Practices: Female genital mutilation	
Q2. Please give 3 recommendations on what the focus of the next Regional Programme Action Plan(RPAP) should be, based on the experience of the country and of the region. <i>Your answer may include the 3 TRs or other priorities of the ICPD PoA.</i>	1. 2. 3.

Section 3: Strategic Shifts and Accelerators

The WCA RPE team recognizes the overlap between strategic shifts and accelerators. Of the 12 strategic shifts in the 2022-2025 strategic plan, there are 4 that fully overlap with the accelerators, 1 that partially overlaps and 1 that does not. Further the RPE adopts the SPE categorization of shifts/accelerators by type:

- (i) those that also serve as accelerators (partially b, c, f, g, k);
- (ii) adjustments identified as crucial strategic shifts (shifts a, h, j, l); and
- (iii) amplifications where UNFPA is tasked with increasing efforts in areas it is already engaged in at the program level (shifts d, e, i).

This survey tool lists the accelerators and shifts as a coherent list, indicating the overlaps as references where applicable.

Strategic Shifts/Accelerators	Q3. Overall, in your opinion how relevant are each of these shifts/accelerators in the context of the country?	Q4. Were the shifts/accelerators incorporated and operationalized in the current Country Programme?	Q5a. What have been the enabling factors ^[1] to incorporating and operationalizing shifts/accelerators?	Q6. What have been the inhibiting factors ^[2] to incorporating and operationalizing shifts/accelerators?	Q7a. To what extent has WCARO supported the CO in implementing these shifts/accelerators?
a) Aligning the organizational focus on achieving the 3TRs	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant	<input type="checkbox"/> a. Incorporated and operationalized <input type="checkbox"/> b. Incorporated but not operationalized <input type="checkbox"/> c. Neither incorporated nor operationalized Q4b. If (a) was selected, explain how?: Q4c. If (b or c) was selected, please explain why:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic communication <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge management <input type="checkbox"/> Human resource management <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ Q5b. Describe how the selected factors have been enabling?	<input type="checkbox"/> Human capital <input type="checkbox"/> Geographical /infrastructure barriers <input type="checkbox"/> Poor safety and security <input type="checkbox"/> Limited stakeholder/donor support <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____ Q6b. Describe how the selected factors have been inhibiting?	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant support <input type="checkbox"/> Some support <input type="checkbox"/> Limited support <input type="checkbox"/> No support Q7b. Please describe the support, if provided: Q7c. What challenges have you experienced in receiving support from the regional office? Q7d. How can the regional office better support the country office?

b) Integrating the effects of megatrends, such as climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities and digitalization, into programming		
c) Increasing the focus on “populations left behind”, and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first” ^[3]		
d) Scaling up the provision of high-quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, as part of universal health coverage plans		
e) Expanding the humanitarian response capacity to better safeguard the lives of women, adolescents and youth, especially adolescent girls, while also addressing mental health and psychosocial issues.		
f) Incorporating the multisectoral needs of women, adolescents and youth, and addressing structural inequalities, such as discriminatory gender and social norms, that hinder the achievement of transformative results. ^[5]		
g) Strengthening the UNFPA normative role in all countries where UNFPA is present		
h) Shifting the focus from funding the ICPD agenda to financing the ICPD agenda		
i) Reinvigorating and expanding partnerships, including those with the private sector, civil society organizations, international financial institutions, academia and media, as well as partnerships through South-South and triangular cooperation. ^[6]		
Q8. In your opinion and based on the country's experience, does the RPAP need to consider new accelerators/strategic shifts to accelerate progress on the 3 TRs and the ICPD PoA?	<input type="radio"/> Yes, new accelerators must be considered <input type="radio"/> No (skip Q10)	Q9. Please name proposed new accelerators /strategic shifts 1. 2. 3.
Q10. Any Other Remarks:		

Thank you for completing the survey!

^[1] Including technical, administrative, human resource and financial capacities

^[2] Including technical, administrative, human resource and financial capacities

^[3] Aligned with Accelerator “e” leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first

^[4] Aligned with accelerator “f” resilience and complementarity among humanitarian, development and peace-responsive efforts.

^[5] Aligned with accelerator “a” human rights-based, gender-transformative approaches.

^[6] Aligned with accelerator “c” partnerships and South-South and triangular cooperation and financing, delivery and research.

KII Questionnaire Protocol and Guide⁸⁷

Protocol

Notes to interviewers:

1. The below master list of questions provides all possible questions to ask key informants. The interviewers use their judgement as to what questions to ask different stakeholders based on an understanding of their role and experience with regard to UNFPA's work. If a respondent does not know the answer to a question it is fine to move on to the next question.
2. Evaluators can either ask the question as a list or jump between questions in a more relaxed and semi-structured manner, depending on how comfortable they feel. The ultimate aim of the interview is to draw out honest and open opinions and views from the interviewee. The most effective way to ensure the interviewee feels comfortable to respond openly and honestly is for the evaluator to be visibly comfortable, which is ensured mostly by the evaluator asking/combining questions in their own manner and style.
3. Key informant interviews should take between 45 minutes and 1 hour.
4. Interviewers take notes in any format, but all interview notes need to then be recorded in the evidence database on a daily-basis.

Key points for general introduction/opening statements:

- Introduce yourself as an independent evaluation consultant, not UNFPA staff.
- A general introduction to the evaluation should include that this is a formative evaluation of the WCARO regional programme. It aligns with the global process of the formative evaluation of the current strategic plan and other regional evaluations all taking place together. An important aspect of this evaluation is that the regional evaluations feed into the global process and vice versa. The purpose is to see how aspects of the strategic plan 2022-2025 – accelerators and strategic shifts – have been implemented across UNFPA's work in view of advancing progress towards achieving UNFPA's transformative results by 2030.
- The information provided in the interviews is confidential and we will ensure that no points in the evaluation report can be traced back to the respondent.
- Check to see if the respondent has any questions about the evaluation at this point.

KII Guide

Opening Question: Can you tell me a little bit about your role?

[For UNFPA staff – how long have you been with UNFPA, and what does your role entail? Which strategic plan/regional plan outputs do you contribute to?]

[For external stakeholders – for how long have you interacted with UNFPA in WCARO? How do you interact? In which areas of work?] Note for interviewer: Mark relevant questions based on this response.

Ending Question: Do you have any final comments, or recommendations? Do you have any questions for me?

⁸⁷ This tool has been adapted from the EECARO RPE

Section 1: General Overview of Strategic Shifts and Accelerators (*Relevance and Operationalization*)

UNFPA staff only

1. [Management] In your view, what purpose do the accelerators/strategic shifts in the current strategic plan serve - globally, regionally, country-level?

OR

1. [Staff] How familiar are you with the accelerators and the strategic shifts in the current strategic plan? In your view, what purpose do they serve?

THEN

2. What are your thoughts on how relevant the different accelerators and the strategic shifts are for scaling up regional programme outputs/country programme outputs and accelerating progress towards the TRs in the region/country? Which accelerators have you adopted? Do you have any thoughts on the selection/appropriateness of the strategic shifts/accelerators that WCARO should consider in light of preparations for the next regional programme?

3. How well has the regional programme/have country programmes (with the support of WCARO) operationalized relevant strategic shifts/accelerators? Which strategies have you applied to operationalize the accelerators/strategic shifts? Any examples?

External respondents

There are certain aspects of work that UNFPA has been trying to strengthen to accelerate progress towards the TRs [explain if necessary], and these include:

- Aligning focus on achieving the 3TRs
- Reaching populations left behind” and emphasizing “reaching those furthest behind first”
- Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities.
- Incorporating effects of megatrends, particularly population dynamics, urbanization, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, climate change, security, digitalization etc.
- Expanding humanitarian preparedness and response capacity and HDP nexus programming in the region.
- Partnerships accelerating progress on 3TRs and ICPD PoA in the region.
- Scaling up the provision of high-quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services and multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence in the region.
- Strengthening UNFPA’s normative role.
- Shifting focus from funding to funding and financing the ICPD agenda in the region.

1. Do you have any thoughts on these “strategic shifts/accelerators”?

- Are they an optimal set?
- Which ones should be prioritised in this region?
- Are there additional ones that you would recommend that should be prioritized?

2. Have there been any changes that have been made to UNFPA’s programmes and engagement with other stakeholders, relating to these “strategic shifts/accelerators?” Any examples?

Section 2: Focusing on Specific Shifts/Accelerators *(Operationalization, Enablers, Barriers and Looking Ahead)*

Aligning focus on achieving the 3TRs

1. How well do you think the regional programme/country programme/programme or project (with support from WCARO) is focused/has been refocused towards UNFPA's transformative results, being ending preventable maternal mortality, ending unmet need for family planning, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030? Any examples?

Reaching populations left behind systematically and coherently

2. In this region, countries have struggled with achieving the 3TRs and SDG goals. Currently no country in UNFPA's WCA classification has achieved any of the 3TRs.

- How well is WCARO/the country offices (with WCARO's support) prioritizing reaching those left behind? Any examples?
- How is implementing this/these approach(es) influencing the achievement of the 3TRs?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Integrating critical mega trends

3. In this region, countries are experiencing the effects of some critical mega trends, particularly but not limited to population dynamics, displacement and migrations, food insecurity, insecurity,

- How well is WCARO/the country office (with WCARO's support) integrating the effects of these trends into programming? Any examples?
- Are there any other megatrends that WCARO/the country office (with support from WCARO) is addressing through a shift in programming in order to accelerate progress towards the TRs? e.g. climate change?
- How is addressing these effects influencing the achievement of the 3TRs?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms

4. Addressing discriminatory social and gender norms and structural and power inequalities, are also especially important in this region,

- How well is WCARO/the country office (with WCARO's support) addressing these discriminatory norms and inequalities? Any examples?
- How is addressing these discriminatory norms and inequalities influencing the achievement of the 3TRs?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Humanitarian preparedness and response capacity & HDP nexus programming

5. Many countries in the region are affected by humanitarian crises, but are often not wholly humanitarian, with parts of the country operating in a development context, and in some cases fluctuations between humanitarian and development contexts.

- In general, how well do you think WCARO/the country office (with WCARO support) has prioritized expanding its humanitarian preparedness and response capacity?
- Is there a difference in how well UNFPA responds to different types of crises? – i.e. acute conflict, protracted conflict, natural disaster etc. Any examples?
- How has the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus approach been integrated into programming in the region ?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Utilising Partnerships to Accelerate Progress

6. Moving to another accelerator: partnerships,

- How well is WCARO/the country office (with WCARO's support) utilising regional and country partnerships to accelerate progress on 3TRs and the ICPD PoA in the region? Any examples?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Scaling Comprehensive SRH Information & Services

6. Scaling up the provision of high-quality, human rights focused comprehensive sSRH information and services, and multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence is an important accelerator for this region,

- How well has WCARO/the country office (with WCARO's support) prioritised scaling up the provision of high-quality, human rights focused comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services, and multi-sectoral response to gender-based violence in the region ? Any examples?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are the opportunities and challenges?

Strengthening UNFPA's Normative Role

7. Moving to another accelerator: strengthening UNFPA's Normative Role

- What is your understanding of UNFPA's normative role?
- Do you think WCARO has successfully played and supported an enhanced normative role in the region/country? Any examples?
- What are the facilitators or barriers?
- Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are opportunities and challenges?

[Note: The evaluation team understands normative role as providing support to an enabling environment, and support to rights-based and gender transformative legislation and policies at the national or regional levels.]

F2F Agenda (UNFPA staff)

8. Another accelerator/strategic shift is the transition from funding to funding and financing,
- How much do you know about the funding to financing agenda?
 - Do you think it is being well embraced in this region/country by WCARO/with support from WCARO? Any examples?
 - What are the facilitators or barriers?
 - Looking ahead to the next regional programme, what are opportunities and challenges?

Section 3 Focusing on Specific Enablers (*Strategic Communication, Human Resources Management, Knowledge Management and Others*)

External respondents

1. As partner/stakeholder, do you feel that WCARO/ the country office has adequately communicated about its work in areas such as [accelerators] [strategic shifts] [adapt to KII]? Any examples?

UNPFA staff

The SPE and RPE have identified and are exploring the influence of specific “enablers” on acceleration and strategic shifts,

1. One is **strategic communication**:

- Have the accelerators and shifts been adequately communicated to staff and partners/stakeholders? Any examples?
- Has strategic communication been used effectively for leveraging UNFPA’s work in areas such as the [accelerators] [strategic shifts] [adapt to KII]? Any examples?
- What opportunities exist to better leverage this enabler?

2. Another is **knowledge management**:

- How effective is UNFPA in the region at knowledge management? Is relevant (tacit) knowledge on the accelerators and strategic shifts being generated and shared/made easily available? Any examples?
- How have you used corporate knowledge on the accelerators and strategic shifts?
- What opportunities exist to better leverage this enabler?

3. A third enabler is **human resource management**:

- How important is human resources strategies and management? For instance, are there adequate staff in place to operationalize the accelerators and shifts?
- Does the performance management system provide the right incentives?
- Are onboarding and orientation/learning opportunities adequate and timely to ensure adequate understanding?
- What opportunities exist to better leverage this enabler?

4. Are there **other “enablers”** in this region/country that have facilitated the acceleration and strategic shifts adopted for the region/country? Please explain.

Section 4 Focusing on Specific Barriers (*Human Capital, Geographical Barriers and Lack of infrastructure, safety and security, limited stakeholder/donor commitment*)

External respondents

1. As a partner /stakeholder, working in the same countries/context, what barriers do you see UNFPA facing in utilising these [accelerators] [strategic shifts]?
2. Have you experienced similar barriers? and how have you addressed these ?
3. What further measures can be taken?

UNPFA staff

The RPE has identified and is exploring the influence of specific “barriers” on acceleration and strategic shifts,

1. One is **human capital**:

- How has inadequate human capital hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region? Any examples?
- What has been done to address this challenge?
- What further measures can be taken?

2. Another is **geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure**:

- How have geographical barriers and lack of infrastructure hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region? Any examples?
- What has been done to address this challenge?
- What further measures can be taken?

3. A third barrier is **poor safety and security**

- How has poor safety and security hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region? Any examples?
- What has been done to address this challenge?
- What further measures can be taken?

4. Another barrier is **limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support**

- How has limited stakeholder/donor commitment and support hindered the operationalization of the accelerators and shifts in the region? Any examples?
- What has been done to address this challenge?
- What further measures can be taken?

5. Are there **other “barriers”** in this region/country that have hindered the utilization of the accelerators and strategic shifts adopted for the region/country? Please explain.