

# GETTING TO **ZERO**



## GOOD PRACTICES ON

Ending preventable maternal deaths

Ending unmet need for family planning

Ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices

## **BRIEF**

A SYNTHESIS OF  
**UNFPA country programme evaluations**



The year 2019 marks the dual anniversary of UNFPA and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). This is a unique and timely opportunity for UNFPA, as the global custodian of the ICPD, to reflect on its achievements and ahead at the work to be done.

By generating evaluative evidence and learning on what works and what does not across varied contexts, the good practices emerging from the synthesis of UNFPA country programme evaluations play a central role in supporting the organization to achieve its three interconnected transformative results. These are as follows:

**1. End preventable maternal deaths**

**2. End unmet need for family planning**

**3. End gender-based violence and all harmful practices**

By supporting organizational learning, the synthesis provides evidence for better programming and decision-making at all levels of UNFPA for faster, more equitable results. The data presented in the synthesis also supports advocates, practitioners, policymakers and researchers

more broadly working to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In this way, the exercise contributes to accelerate efforts to achieve the goals embodied in the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

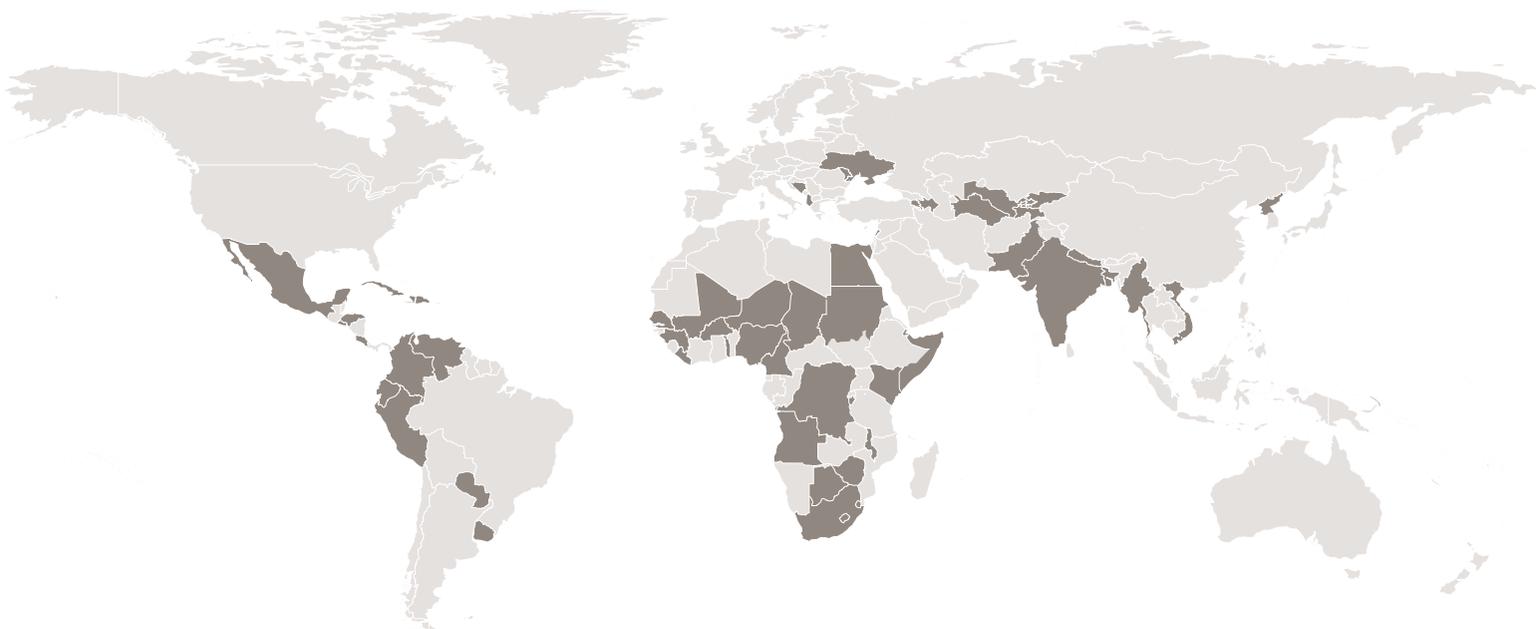
To identify and validate good practices, the synthesis undertook a systematic review and analysis of evidence captured in 57 UNFPA country programme evaluations conducted between 2012 and 2018. The most common good practices in, and limitations to, advancing the three transformative results are presented in this brief. While the full synthesis report captures the top five good practices per transformative result, the top three, by frequency across country programme evaluations, are highlighted here.



#### **WHAT IS A GOOD PRACTICE?**

A **good practice** is defined as a broad programmatic approach that has been shown to reliably lead to a desired result.

## **Geographic coverage of country programme evaluations included in the synthesis**



The designations employed and the presentation of material on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNFPA concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

## TRANSFORMATIVE RESULT 1: End preventable maternal deaths

**GOOD PRACTICE 1:** Aligning services and protocols with international standards and providing universal healthcare coverage contributes to higher-quality maternal health services

In various contexts, UNFPA worked to align healthcare services to international standards – supporting, for example, trainings on new protocols and best international practices – which contributed to improved and increased quality services and diverse positive outcomes supporting maternal health.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Aligning national strategies for maternal care with international frameworks in Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNFPA advocacy contributed to the inclusion of ICPD objectives in national health strategies between 2008 and 2012. This helped scale midwifery training in childbirth-assisted deliveries and Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care in targeted areas. The work contributed to steady increases in the number of midwives trained in line with the World Health Organization's International Confederation of Midwives standards, which had a positive impact on women's health care in the country. In targeted areas, the rate of assisted deliveries rose from 55 to 86 per cent between 2013 and 2014, the management of obstetric complications was improved, and antenatal care increased from 7 to 28 per cent.

**GOOD PRACTICE 2:** Capacity development strengthens the technical skills of health workers and increases national sexual and reproductive health and rights competencies, reducing maternal mortality

Targeted training provided by UNFPA to health service providers on safe practices facilitated the improvement of health services, including during pre and postnatal periods. UNFPA used various approaches to increase awareness and sensitivity among health workers, strengthen providers' skills in remote areas, and provide training to facility staff in logistics management. Following these interventions, some countries saw increased use of services and others saw a reduction in maternal mortality rates.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Scaling up of national health service quality standards in El Salvador

In El Salvador, UNFPA supported a scale-up of national health service quality standards, specifically integrating health services and bringing together groups with diverse specializations in maternal health, adolescent and youth care and HIV. The country office worked closely with the Ministry of Health to ensure improved service delivery was provided by skilled providers. This contributed to a greater number of women attending prenatal visits and more deliveries attended by trained professionals, contributing to a decrease in the maternal mortality ratio from 42 in 2012 to 38 in 2013 for every 100,000 live births.

**GOOD PRACTICE 3:** Improving policies, protocols and laws to promote safe motherhood contributes to better maternal health outcomes

While skill building, infrastructure development and referral systems are necessary to reduce maternal mortality, support for the development of institutional policies and the integration of best practices at the national level are also required, and improve sustainability over time. Advocacy led by UNFPA helped to lay the groundwork for effective policies and protocols for quality care in a variety of settings.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Policy advocacy on safe motherhood and reproductive health in Nepal

In Nepal, UNFPA advocacy efforts helped to initiate critical legal reforms protecting women's health. The UNFPA country office supported a campaign that contributed to the constitutional recognition of sexual and reproductive health issues as fundamental human rights, through the inclusion of human rights language in the Constitution of Nepal 2015. This established the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health as an important pillar of the public health agenda.

## TRANSFORMATIVE RESULT 2: End unmet need for family planning

**GOOD PRACTICE 1:** Targeted sexual and reproductive health and rights awareness-raising, specifically around family planning, helps increase knowledge and supports positive behaviour change among key communities

Increasing SRHR awareness – particularly among youth – has shown to contribute to improved family planning outcomes. UNFPA works with various actors to deepen knowledge on SRHR and family planning, which in turn supports these stakeholders to become advocates for change, facilitating sustained awareness and commitment over the long term. In some countries, targeted awareness-raising efforts contributed to positive behaviour change, including safer sex practices and an increased demand for health services.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Working with religious and community leaders to engage youth in Niger

In Niger, UNFPA supported training for religious and community leaders to engage youth more effectively by adapting SRHR materials to the cultural and social context. The locally rooted awareness and media campaigns contributed to two-thirds of young people reporting a deeper understanding of puberty, menstrual hygiene, the risks of early pregnancies, the prevention of female genital mutilation (FGM), the role of contraception, and the importance of family planning. Notably, the training contributed to a sharp increase in married adolescent girls using family planning methods, from 13 to 30 per cent, between 2014 and 2017.

**GOOD PRACTICE 2:** Expanding the role of both service providers and/or communities in healthcare and the consistent availability of supplies improves access to and use of family planning among diverse populations and within under-served areas

UNFPA interventions that aim to improve access to family planning among rural, indigenous and other underserved populations include task shifting/sharing, meaningful engagement of communities, and the strengthening of national health systems and commodity procurement chains. Together, these approaches contribute to the efficient use of resources in under-served areas where health professionals are scarce, as well as the empowerment of communities to ensure sustained use of family planning methods across all groups.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Expanding access to indigenous communities in Peru

In order to expand reproductive healthcare and improve access to services among indigenous populations in Peru, UNFPA piloted a health services model to train providers, raise awareness and empower the community to take control of their health. Inclusive community committees, made up of local and national actors, held intercultural dialogues. In addition, UNFPA worked together with local communities to create a toolbox on culturally sensitive health services for indigenous citizens.

**GOOD PRACTICE 3:** Actionable policy frameworks, especially those supported by government financial commitments, contribute to stronger and more sustainable family planning programmes

Developing actionable family planning policy frameworks sets the groundwork for improved family planning outcomes. Policies that are resourced with a dedicated budget often signal strong national political will and commitment. Across various contexts, UNFPA, through advocacy, has contributed to strengthening the political and financial commitments of governments to improve and increase national family planning programmes.



**FROM THE FIELD:** Ensuring quality reproductive health services for those furthest behind in Turkmenistan

In Turkmenistan, UNFPA, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and other UN Agencies, supported the development of the National Strategy on HIV for 2012-2016 as well as guidelines on HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Additionally, UNFPA supported the outreach work among key populations, raising awareness on prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. More specifically, UNFPA supported peer outreach work among sex workers, drop-in centers for improved access to services, and strengthened guidelines for SRHR among sex workers. This support contributed to improved quality of reproductive health services for sex workers, who are often marginalized by discriminatory policies.

## TRANSFORMATIVE RESULT 3: End gender-based violence and all harmful practices

**GOOD PRACTICE 1:** Strengthened laws and policies, along with legal frameworks that protect women's and girls' rights, contribute to eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices

Strong legal frameworks that guarantee women's and girls' right to be free from violence are vital mechanisms for ending gender-based violence and harmful practices. Established legal precedents offer protection and rights-claiming mechanisms for survivors, and can criminalise gender-based violence and harmful practices – ultimately supporting prevention efforts. UNFPA has provided technical assistance and mobilized relevant stakeholders through policy dialogue and advocacy to help develop and/or strengthen laws on gender-based violence and harmful practices.



**FROM THE FIELD: Advocating for legal frameworks that end gender-based violence in Tajikistan**

In Tajikistan, the first Law on Prevention of Violence in the Family was adopted in March 2013. UNFPA, together with international and national organizations, contributed to efforts to pass the law – a significant legislative win – after a decade of collective advocacy. UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO also promoted revisions to the 2002 Law on Reproductive Health and Rights to ensure the law was gender-sensitive and effectively addressed gender-based violence.

**GOOD PRACTICE 2:** Engaging influential actors, as well as men and boys, accelerates progress towards changing attitudes and practices related to gender-based violence and harmful practices

The acceptability of violence is rooted in discriminatory belief and value systems, and changing this requires altering attitudes, behaviours and social norms. By engaging influential figures and role models, UNFPA employs an effective strategy to stimulate change in norms and behaviour, because people are more willing to shift perspectives based on information gained from people they trust.



**FROM THE FIELD: Mobilizing influential actors across countries to take collective action against FGM**

Conducted in partnership with the Al-Azhar University of Cairo, UNFPA engaged religious leaders in Somalia in a workshop on the long-

term negative consequences of FGM. Bringing together line ministries, prominent sheikhs, civil society organizations and scholars from Al-Azhar University, the workshop prompted action among participants to reduce FGM, including formal declarations condemning the practice and fatwa, an Islamic decree, outlawing all forms of FGM. A regional religious network against FGM, which mobilized activists and prominent sheikhs and religious leaders from Djibouti, Egypt, Somalia and Sudan to work together to end the harmful practice, was also formed in Puntland.

**GOOD PRACTICE 3:** Increased awareness of gender-based violence and effective response mechanisms by both health workers and other public workers contributes to higher-quality services

UNFPA support to strengthen health and other public workers' awareness of, and capacity to address gender-based violence is strategic, due to the critical role these communities/actors play in addressing gender-based violence. UNFPA interventions targeted health and social workers and law enforcement, as they are often the first point of contact for survivors, as well as staff in the legal system and the education sector, among others, to improve the quality of services provided to survivors.



**FROM THE FIELD: Strengthening response mechanisms to end gender-based violence in Sudan**

UNFPA supported a range of interventions in Sudan to deepen health workers' abilities to respond to gender-based violence in emergency and post-conflict settings. This included the strengthening of institutional processes to address women's needs in South Sudan, refugee camps in the White Nile, and Ethiopian refugees in Khartoum. Specifically, UNFPA provided training on responding to gender-based violence to midwives, doctors and social workers. The training focused on strengthening referral pathways and improved clinical management of rape. UNFPA also engaged host communities in the detection and prevention of violence against women and girls. Taken together, this support strengthened and diversified the range of services offered in internally displaced peoples' camp in Sudan.

## Overarching good practices

Given the interrelated nature of the transformative results, there were several overarching good practices that emerged across the three transformative results.



### **Attention to and transformation of discriminatory social and cultural norms, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs**

accelerates positive change in all transformative results



### **Strategic use of diverse partnerships with government, UN agencies, civil society and influential actors at local, national, regional and global levels helps to accelerate change**

UN agencies, civil society and influential actors at local, national, regional and global levels helps to accelerate change



### **Planning for and ensuring attention to SRHR in crisis situations**

leads to more responsive humanitarian interventions that help rebuild communities



### **Supporting the generation and use of quality data**

promotes targeted action and accountability across all transformative results



### **UNFPA interventions that engage in gender analysis and integrate gender mainstreaming**

are better positioned to improve the lives of women and girls

While progress has been made, there is still much to be done. In order to deliver on the promise of the ICPD, UNFPA needs stronger capacity to effectively monitor results, explicit exit strategies to promote sustainable programming, and greater investment of resources to effectively respond to development challenges. Alongside these internal challenges, the complex contexts in which UNFPA operates are often difficult to manoeuvre, especially when the political, legal, cultural and social structures, institutions and frameworks within a country may constrain progress.

The learning from this synthesis offers the opportunity for UNFPA and its partners to reflect on these challenges and alter course to catalyse the transformative change needed to fulfil the commitments of the ICPD and the 2030 Agenda.

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