

**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**  
UNFPA Asia and the Pacific



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# PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS



**Delivering a world where  
every pregnancy is wanted,  
every childbirth is safe,  
and every young person's  
potential is fulfilled.**



# CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR .....	1
KEY RESULTS FROM 2023 .....	3
OUR WORK ACROSS ASIA AND THE PACIFIC .....	5
ENDING MATERNAL DEATHS .....	7
ENDING UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING .....	9
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES .....	13
HUMANITARIAN ACTION .....	19
YOUNG PEOPLE .....	31
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT .....	35
FINANCING THE ICPD AGENDA .....	35
LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND .....	43
PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACCELERATION .....	47



## MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

I am delighted to present the 2023 annual report of UNFPA's Asia-Pacific Regional Office. Since assuming the role of Regional Director in October 2023, I have been deeply humbled and motivated by the critical work carried out by our staff and partners across the region in meeting the needs and aspirations of millions of women and girls in Asia and the Pacific.

**In 2023, we continued to advance efforts to end maternal mortality, enhance access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, including family planning, and combat gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage and son preference.**

Meanwhile, in the backdrop, this region faces evolving demographic trends such as urbanization and migration, climate change, low fertility, and population ageing, along with rapid digital advancements. We remain committed to supporting countries in capitalizing on the demographic opportunities these megatrends present to build healthier and sustainable communities.

Highlights from our work last year include co-hosting the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference, which was a milestone achievement in reviewing progress of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

We also supported responses to 37 humanitarian crises, led initiatives to enhance midwifery skills, and advocated for evidence-based policy making through investment cases on health financing and national transfer accounts.



In 2023, I also had the opportunity to visit Afghanistan and Myanmar where I saw firsthand the dedicated work of our staff and partners in some of the most complex operational contexts. Sustaining our work to ensure women and girls continue to receive life-saving support requires collective attention, focus, investments, and renewed commitment to leave no one behind.

I encourage you to read about our 2023 achievements in this report. These accomplishments were made possible through the collaborative efforts of our staff, valuable partners, and the generous support from our donors.

Together, let us continue to pave the way for progressive pathways towards a healthier and equitable world for women and girls across Asia and the Pacific.

**Pio Smith**  
Regional Director  
UNFPA, Asia and the Pacific



# OUR WORK ACROSS ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

**As the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, UNFPA strives to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.**

Across Asia and the Pacific, together with our sub-regional office in the Pacific, we provide strategic guidance and support to 36 country offices in the region to enable safe deliveries, prevent unintended pregnancies, and address violence against women and girls - in both development and humanitarian contexts.

We do this by focusing on the three zeros of UNFPA's global strategic plan: zero maternal deaths, zero unmet need for family planning, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030.

Using data, innovation and tried-and-tested approaches, our strategic guidance strengthens national systems, champions human rights, and empowers women, girls, and young people across Asia and the Pacific.



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## KEY RESULTS FROM 2023

-  Supported 32 countries in the region in submitting national reviews of the ICPD Programme of Action for the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference.
-  Supported midwifery educators and regulators from 19 countries across the region through a large regional initiative to build capacity and a community of experts in midwifery education and training.
-  Supported 4 countries with country case studies highlighting girls' voices to prevent adolescent pregnancy and child marriage for evidence-based advocacy and programming.
-  Supported 7 countries in developing new investment cases for the three transformative results.
-  Provided dedicated technical support to 15 country offices in utilizing global guidelines on addressing gender-based violence in development and humanitarian settings.
-  Supported 8 countries in explicitly integrating demographic dynamics into national development plans.
-  Supported 37 emergency responses in 15 countries across the region.
-  Distributed US\$431,637 worth of prepositioned supplies across 20 emergency responses in six countries in the region, reaching over 56,000 people through the Regional Prepositioning Initiative.
-  Supported 19 Country Offices and partners across the region on gender-based violence case management through a regional capacity strengthening initiative.
-  Supported country offices to mobilize US\$207 million in non-core resources.
-  Reached over 10.2 million people by publishing over 3,300 new communications content on UNFPA Asia-Pacific social media platforms.



1 ENDING MATERNAL DEATHS



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## ENDING MATERNAL DEATHS

**No mother should die giving birth.**

**The Sustainable Development Goals targets a maternal mortality ratio under 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030, yet 12 countries in Asia-Pacific still report over 100 mothers dying per 100,000 births.**

**We support countries across Asia and the Pacific to end maternal mortality by strengthening quality healthcare including providing supplies, training healthcare professionals, and more.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- 19 countries strengthened Midwifery Education and Regulatory frameworks via a regional Asia-Pacific initiative promoting a community of practice and midwifery capacity-building. Tailored support to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, and Timor-Leste included the development of national roadmaps for midwifery education, which can serve as models for other countries.
- Maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response guidelines and protocols were enhanced per global standards in Bangladesh, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Laos PDR, and Cambodia through the training of health-care professionals to review and strengthen these guidelines, which are essential to preventing repeat maternal and perinatal deaths.
- Family planning and maternal health was integrated into essential health benefits packages for universal health coverage through our advocacy during the 14th Pacific Heads of Health Meeting in April.



# 2 ENDING UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING



## ENDING UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING

Empowering women in the Asia-Pacific with family planning transforms lives and economies: for the 140 million in need of family planning supplies and information, breaking barriers to health, social, and awareness can turn the tide on unintended pregnancies.

We strive to ensure that every woman and girl is empowered with the right and choice to decide for herself whether and when to have children.

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- UNFPA Indonesia developed an investment case focusing on family planning and maternal health, asserting that funding family planning and maternal health not only lowers maternal and child deaths and boosts health and education, but also spurs productivity, economic growth, and reduces poverty.
- UNFPA Timor-Leste developed a budget brief, which was a strategic move to influence the 2024 national budgetary discussions, aiming to secure greater funding for family planning and maternal health services in the country.
- Progress in universal access to family planning was instrumental in reducing unplanned pregnancies among women living with HIV and vulnerable women such as sex workers, transgender people, and incarcerated women, who often face unique challenges in managing their reproductive health.

## SEVENTH ASIAN AND PACIFIC POPULATION CONFERENCE

*"Strengthened regional collaboration is required now more than ever. The energy, spirit and genuine interest that each of you have shown to work together to advance the quality of life of every individual that calls this region home is promising."*

- UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme), Diene Keita

Over 400 delegates from across Asia and the Pacific came together in Bangkok to review the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development (2013) and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) at the Seventh Asian and Pacific Population Conference held from 15-17 November 2023.

The conference provided an opportunity to celebrate successes and discuss the challenges needed to accelerate action.

Delegates acknowledged that shifting population dynamics, the intensifying climate crisis, increasing migration, growing urbanization and rapid digital advancement are affecting economic, social and environmental outcomes. Moreover, they noted that inequality and social injustice persist.

Yet, the message was clear: Forward-looking policies that capitalize on the demographic transition and place individual rights and choices at the centre are key to building sustainable and thriving societies and economies.

Partnerships across the region to exchange experiences, increase investments and accelerate progress were also noted as critical to achieving shared goals.



**Seventh Asian and Pacific  
Population Conference**

BANGKOK 15-17 NOVEMBER 2023



# 3 ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

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## ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of survivors, yet remains shrouded in a culture of silence.**

**As the lead agency working to respond to and reduce gender-based violence, UNFPA, together with our partners, work to strengthen prevention mechanisms and response services for survivors of violence, including psychosocial support.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- 19 Country Offices and partners gained knowledge on international standards on GBV case management through a regional capacity strengthening initiative.
- 8 Country Offices (Afghanistan, China, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Mongolia, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor Leste) were provided with technical assistance to strengthen GBV response through the health sector.
- 5 countries (Vietnam, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, and Pakistan) were able to strengthen their 'one-stop' crisis centre services that provide comprehensive support to GBV survivors.
- 9 country offices (Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Mongolia, Bhutan, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Philippines) were supported in planning and implementing GBV prevention strategies and initiatives.
- 6 countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vanuatu, Bhutan, Mongolia, and Cambodia) were supported to collect, analyze and utilize violence against women prevalence data to inform policy advocacy and programming to address gender based violence.
- 30 participants from 12 countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Thailand, and Vanuatu) were trained on specialized violence against women prevalence measurement through kNOwVAWdata course.



## ENDING HARMFUL PRACTICES

**Child marriage, gender-biased sex selection, and female genital mutilation are harmful practices that continue to strip the dignity and safety of women and girls across Asia and the Pacific.**

**Facilitating regional dialogues and targeted interventions on the ground, we work to address these deep-rooted harmful social norms that violate the fundamental human rights of women and girls.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- The South Asia Child Marriage Regional Forum in collaboration with UNICEF, Plan and Care International was held with a commitment to achieve the SDG 5.3 target by government agencies, ministries, CSOs and development partners, young people and communities by working together, in a concerted and committed manner to end child marriage.
- A South-East Asia regional roundtable was hosted in partnership with UNICEF, to foster a community of practice and strategize on addressing child, early, and forced marriages, which led to Laos PDR and the Philippines securing financial support for 2024.
- 9 countries (Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos PDR, the Philippines, and Mongolia) developed proposals to secure funding for programmes addressing harmful practices and social norms.
- 5 webinars and a regional workshop were conducted on Value-based Dialogues with Women's Learning Partnership, reaching 90 participants and enhancing capacity in India, Pakistan, Mongolia, Malaysia and the Philippines on human rights and gender equality.
- Country offices were guided on developing and rolling out Universal Periodic Review resolution implementation related to child marriage, violence against female detainees, and maternal health.



4

# HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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## HUMANITARIAN ACTION

**Asia-Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world and home to several protracted conflicts - with women and girls bearing the brunt of these crises.**

**By centering humanitarian responses on the health, safety and dignity of women and girls, UNFPA provides life-saving supplies and sexual and reproductive health and protection services in the most fragile contexts, helping save lives and strengthen the resilience of communities, families, and women and girls.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- 37 disasters and crises in the region were responded to across 15 countries in the region.
- 10 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga) were supported to preposition lifesaving supplies to ensure timely delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations.
- 21 countries built the capacity of health service providers, programme managers and other national partners on integrated sexual and reproductive health and GBV response, Cash and Voucher Assistance, Accountability to Affected Populations, and Supply Chain Management in humanitarian programming through training workshops, readiness assessments, and expert consultations.
- 8 countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Laos PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines) were provided with technical guidance on GBV in Emergencies including coordination of life-saving GBV response services.
- We delivered US\$3 million worth of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) to 90,000 recipients through 73 projects, and conducted 2 research studies with Johns Hopkins University to further inform evidence-based CVA programming in sexual and reproductive health, menstrual health and hygiene and gender-based violence case management.
- Through the leadership of the Regional GBV in Emergencies Working Group, UNFPA facilitated enhanced collaboration among UN and civil society organizations for provision of life-saving GBV response service in humanitarian context.



# 5

## YOUNG PEOPLE



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## YOUNG PEOPLE

Nearly one billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 live in Asia and the Pacific, comprising 60 per cent of the world's adolescents and young people.

Every young person will one day need to make life-changing decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. We empower young people with the knowledge they need through comprehensive sexuality education and life skills, ensuring youth-responsive sexual and reproductive health services, and more.

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- Over 100 young people from across Asia and the Pacific actively voiced their concerns and priorities for the future during the pre-conference and sessions of the 7th Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in Bangkok in November to review the progress of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the region.
- 4 countries were supported with country case studies highlighting girls' voices to prevent adolescent pregnancy and child marriage for evidence-based advocacy and programming.
- 7+ countries (Bhutan, Mongolia, India, Laos PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, and others) improved their comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and strengthened CSE advocacy, including a draft theory of change model and research framework in Mongolia on how in-school CSE programming can serve as an entry point for prevention of GBV.
- 4 countries were supported to introduce innovative out-of-school CSE for marginalized groups.
- 93 young digital content creators in 12 countries trained were at a digital sexuality education bootcamp to research sexual and reproductive health, combat tech-facilitated GBV, and strategize for low-resource settings.



# 6

## POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT



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## POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The world's population at eight billion is driven by a largely increasing number of people of reproductive age. This is accompanied by shifting demographics globally, and across Asia and the Pacific with rapid urbanization, large-scale migration, digital advancements, and population ageing as emerging population trends.

We support countries across the region to make evidence-based policy decisions that capitalize on these shifting demographics by ensuring gender equality and the rights of women and girls are at the core of population policies.

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- 3 countries made progress in their 2024/2025 census preparations (Sri Lanka, Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea) while post-enumeration support was provided to 3 recent census countries (Maldives, Nepal, Philippines).
- 6 countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Maldives, Nepal, and Timor-Leste) benefitted from analysis of sexual and reproductive health data in their health management information systems, and worked towards improved SRHR data analysis, data quality and integration across different data systems.
- 6 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos PDR, Nepal, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea) were capacitated to analyze the bottlenecks and other challenges related to the implementation of effective Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response Systems (MPDSR) in each country, and developed action plans to improve key elements of the MPDSR processes.
- 10 countries and 1 region (Bhutan, India, China, Mongolia, Malaysia, Laos PDR, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Pacific Sub-Regional Office) were reached with technical expertise on National Transfer Accounts (NTA) to enhance the understanding of the NTA concept, methodology, and policy implications.



# 7 FINANCING THE ICPD AGENDA

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## FINANCING THE ICPD AGENDA

**Traditional mechanisms for financing the 2030 Agenda are insufficient to accelerate progress on implementing the ICPD Programme of Action.**

**UNFPA is working with multiple stakeholders across the region to mobilize and influence diverse sources of financing for development, which revolves around increased ownership and reliance on domestic resources, active engagement of the private sector, and experimentation with novel and innovative forms of financing.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- 7 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and the Philippines) were supported in developing new investment cases for the three transformative results to influence domestic resource mobilization toward the ICPD agenda.
- UNFPA developed an ROI (return-on-investment) tool to demonstrate the benefits of investing in sexual and reproductive health services in workplace settings to encourage private sector entities and businesses to integrate and finance sexual and reproductive health services within their organizations.
- The second Financing for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (F4SRHR) e-learning programme was launched, and a four-day workshop was organized with the objective of equipping participants from across the region with knowledge and skills to utilize public finance principles and tools and to facilitate the strategic transitioning of UNFPA's approach from mere funding to a more comprehensive financing model.
- Through the Strategic Investment Facility, 9 pioneering pilot projects were introduced, with a total investment of \$1.5 million, spanning across Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Thailand (2 projects).



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8

LEAVING NO ONE  
BEHIND



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## LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

**Some groups such as people with disabilities and of diverse sexual orientation face factors of exclusion in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and information.**

**To accelerate the ICPD promise and achieve the SDGs, we must reach those furthest behind. Powerful inclusion efforts are needed to overcome the exclusion of those left behind, and we are committed to ensure rights and choices are universal.**

### IN 2023, THROUGH OUR SUPPORT:

- The partnership with the Global Disability Innovation (GDI) Hub helped finalize the contents of disability - inclusive dignity kits for women and girls in emergencies. The GDI Hub is the WHO Global Collaborating Centre on Assistive Technology and works with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, to mainstream disability innovation.
- The partnership with CBM global disability inclusion helped increase the capacity of countries in disability data.
- APRO developed regional guidance and tools for disability inclusion in GBV programming. Building on these tools, 5 countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Timor Leste, and Vietnam) were equipped to integrate disability inclusion in GBV programming and policy advocacy.
- UNFPA regional and national staff were sensitized on ensuring an inclusive and non-stigmatizing workplace, including acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQI individuals.
- The capacity of national human rights bodies and civic groups in 3 countries (Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Tuvalu) was strengthened to advocate for and monitor human rights recommendation implementations aimed at achieving transformative outcomes.



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9

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
ACCELERATION**



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## PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACCELERATION

**Partnerships and resource mobilization play a crucial role in enabling UNFPA to achieve its mission in the Asia-Pacific region, helping us to accelerate access to sexual and reproductive health, respond effectively to humanitarian crises, and ensure the provision of vital reproductive health supplies to women and girls in need.**

Additionally, resource mobilization efforts, including the leveraging of core resources to attract additional funding, have been instrumental in scaling up innovative approaches and sustaining advocacy and normative roles across the region, demonstrating a significant return on investment for every dollar raised.

As a regional office, we provide oversight and guidance to country offices in mobilizing resources, and also raise funds on behalf of country offices.

In 2023, we directly supported country offices to mobilize \$18 million to implement humanitarian response, while providing oversight to country offices to mobilize US\$207 million in non-core resources.

# Thank you

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





# PATHWAYS TO PROGRESS

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Published in April 2024