

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Structure, Campaigns

November 15, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the UN agency responsible for advancing global reproductive health, population data systems, gender equality, and bodily autonomy. Established in 1969, UNFPA today works in over 150 countries, covering regions across Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Arab States and Europe. With more than 3,111 staff (2022), UNFPA plays a central role in improving maternal health, preventing gender-based violence, supporting national population policies, and promoting the rights of women and young people.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The abbreviation UNFPA's full form is the **United Nations Population Fund**. It was originally called the **United Nations Fund for Population Activities** when it was established in 1967, but its name was officially changed in 1987 while the UNFPA abbreviation was retained.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) functions as a key partner for governments by helping them develop strong public health systems and gender-responsive initiatives. It funds training for healthcare workers, improves

access to essential services in remote areas, and encourages countries to adopt evidence-based population policies. The organisation also leads global campaigns against harmful practices like early marriage and gender-based violence. Through research support and capacity building, UNFPA helps nations shape development strategies that protect human dignity and equal opportunity.

Also Read: [United Nations Environment Programme](#)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Historical Development

UNFPA originated from a series of global concerns about rising population pressures during the 1960s. In December 1966, twelve Heads of State issued a declaration urging the UN to take a leadership role in global population issues. Following this, the UN Secretary-General created a population trust fund in 1967. UNFPA (then called the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) began operations in 1969 under the United Nations Development Fund. Key milestones in evolution:

- 1971- Placed under the authority of the UN General Assembly, establishing its independent status.
- 1987- Renamed the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), though the abbreviation continued unchanged.
- 2015- UNFPA becomes a principal driver for SDGs 3, 4 and 5.
- 2025- UNFPA releases major reports warning about declining global fertility rates.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Purpose

UNFPA focuses on ensuring reproductive rights, preventing gender-based violence, and strengthening population data systems. Its three Transformative Goals, aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), guide global operations:

1. Zero Preventable Maternal Deaths: UNFPA leads global maternal health initiatives, with a strong focus on emergency obstetric care, skilled birth attendance, and midwifery training.
2. Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning: This involves expanding voluntary access to contraceptives, supply-chain strengthening, and improving reproductive choices.
3. Zero Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices: UNFPA supports shelters, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and survivor-centric GBV response systems. These targets aim to transform reproductive health outcomes by 2030.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and SDGs

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) directly contributes to Sustainable Development Goals:

- SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)- Maternal health, reproductive rights, family planning.
- SDG 4 (Quality Education)- Gender equity in schooling, sexuality education.
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality)- Ending child marriage, harmful practices, GBV interventions.
- UNFPA also indirectly strengthens SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Global Fertility

In June 2025, UNFPA released a landmark global report warning about an unprecedented decline in fertility across the world. The study surveyed 14,000 individuals across 14 countries, including India, USA, Sweden, Brazil, Indonesia, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa, collectively representing nearly one-third of the global population. Key findings:

- People around the world are having fewer children than desired.
- Major reasons: high childcare costs, career pressures, unstable incomes, and gender-unequal care burdens.
- UNFPA leadership highlighted this as a major demographic turning point.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Organizational Structure

The Executive Directors of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are listed below:

1. Rafael M. Salas (1969-1987)
2. Nafis Sadik (1987-2000)
3. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid (2001-2010)
4. Babatunde Osotimehin (2011-2017)
5. Natalia Kanem (2017-2025)
6. Diene Keita (2025-Present)

Also Read: [World Trade Organisation](#)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Areas of Work

UNFPA is the largest multilateral funder of reproductive and population health programs globally. Key Workstreams Include:

1. Family Planning and Reproductive Health: Includes contraceptive distribution, safe delivery systems, midwifery programs, reproductive rights promotion.
2. Maternal Health and Obstetric Care: UNFPA supports emergency obstetric care units, midwife training, and healthcare infrastructure.
3. Eliminating Gender-Based Violence: GBV prevention, safe houses, legal support, and emergency response in humanitarian zones.
4. Population Data Systems: Assists nations with census operations, demographic analysis, and population policy formulation.
5. Ending Harmful Practices: UNFPA leads global interventions against:
 - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
 - Child Marriage
 - Obstetric Fistula

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Process

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) works through partnerships with: National governments, Local NGOs, UN agencies (UNICEF, **WHO**, **UNDP**), Philanthropic foundations, Private sector entities, UNFPA also co-sponsors the Special Programme on Human Reproduction.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Budget

In 2016, UNFPA received \$848 million, including: \$353 million in core resources and \$495 million for earmarked programs. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an 85 percent aid cut from the United Kingdom, affecting several maternal health initiatives.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Campaigns

Major Global Campaigns that have been led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been listed below:

1. Campaign to End Obstetric Fistula (Active in 40+ countries)
 - Launched in 2003
 - Aims to prevent and treat obstetric fistula
 - Over 2 million women live with untreated fistula in Africa and South Asia
 - Nearly 800 women die daily due to childbirth complications
2. Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
 - 100-140 million women affected globally
 - UNFPA-UNICEF joint program (2007)
 - Invested \$44 million to reduce FGM by 40 percent in 16 nations by 2015

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United States Government

UNFPA funding has historically fluctuated due to US domestic politics.

- Withholding of Funds: Under the Kemp-Kasten Amendment (1985), multiple US administrations cited alleged involvement in coercive abortion programs, especially in China.
- Investigations: A US State Department fact-finding team concluded there was no evidence that UNFPA supported forced abortions.
- Funding Restorations: In 2009, President Barack Obama reinstated funding, aligning the US with 180 donor nations.
- Funding Cut Again in 2017: The Trump administration withdrew support, citing coercion concerns which UNFPA denied.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) International Coordination

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) collaborates with various international organization for several campaigns and motives as given below. These collaborations help integrate population issues into global development policies.

- UN Commission on Population and Development
- UN DESA Population Division
- Global Fund
- WHO, UNICEF
- Regional bodies (AU, ASEAN, EU)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Challenges

Despite of various advancements and progress, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) faces several backlashes and criticism as highlighted below:

1. **Funding Volatility:** Political decisions by major donors affect core programs. **Way Forward:** Diversify funding sources, strengthen private sector partnerships.
2. **Rising Global Humanitarian Crises:** Conflict zones increase maternal mortality and GBV. **Way Forward:** Expand emergency reproductive health kits and mobile clinics.
3. **Cultural Resistance to Reproductive Rights:** FGM, child marriage, and early pregnancies persist. **Way Forward:** Community-based interventions and local leadership training.
4. **Fertility Decline and Ageing Populations:** UNFPA warns of global demographic imbalance. **Way Forward:** Evidence-based fertility policies, childcare subsidies, work-life reforms.
5. **Misinformation and Political Backlash:** Reproductive rights face ideological opposition. **Way Forward:** Strengthen awareness campaigns and rights-based advocacy.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) UPSC

The United Nations Population Fund remains central to global reproductive rights, demographic research, and gender equality. Despite political challenges and funding constraints, UNFPA's mission continues to shape maternal health outcomes and empower millions worldwide. Its role in the SDG framework and its transformative goals make UNFPA indispensable in addressing global demographic challenges and ensuring the rights and dignity of women and youth globally. Various recent advancements and developments are:

- 2023: UNFPA released the State of World Population Report highlighting 44% of global pregnancies are unintended.
- 2024: Humanitarian corridors in Gaza supplied reproductive health kits and maternal aid.
- 2025: Global fertility decline flagged as a major demographic turning point.
- 2025: New Executive Director Diene Keita begins leadership focusing on youth, digital health, and climate-resilient reproductive systems.
- 2025: UNFPA expands its Data for Demographic Resilience initiative.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/united-nations-population-fund-unfpa/>

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