



5 January 2023

UNFPA ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

This note, prepared in response to Executive Board decision 2022/14, outlines how UNFPA, as the United Nations agency for sexual and reproductive health, is scaling-up its engagement and unique partnership with international financial institutions to implement the commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and achieve its three transformative results – ending unmet need for family planning; ending preventable maternal deaths; and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices – as outlined in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.

I. Introduction

1. The world is confronted with multiple overlapping and complex crises. The global economic outlook is daunting and unprecedented; with rising levels of poverty and the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic compounding the most pessimistic scenarios. Climate change, conflicts, and related cost-of-living shocks, along with rising interest payments on public debt further threaten the capacity of many countries to invest in human development. A recent analysis by the World Bank Group¹ suggests that most developing countries are struggling to make the necessary public investment in health and governments of these countries will face difficult choices about the priority given to health to avoid falls in per capita government health spending. At the same time, official development assistance (ODA) for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHRR) is experiencing a downward trend, and the most recent analysis of population-related matters shows a declining share of ODA.²

2. In this landscape, it is the poorest and most vulnerable who are facing the brunt of reversals on progress towards the SDGs, especially women and girls. UNFPA has estimated that an additional \$222 billion in financing³ is needed to achieve the three transformative results by 2030, underscoring the importance of reversing the decline and scaling-up the financing to meet the investment needed, through fully leveraging the strength of different partners, including the IFIs. At the same time, recognizing that such investments in SRHRR are an integral part of a sustainable and inclusive global recovery, and critical drivers in delivering strong returns to economies and societies.⁴

¹ World Bank Group (2022), [From double shock to double recovery. Technical Update: Old Scars, New Wounds](#)

² Commission on Population and Development, fifty-fifth session (2022), [Report of the Secretary-General](#) on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and development (E/CN.9/2022/4).

³ UNFPA (2020), [Costing the three transformative results](#) – The cost of the transformative results UNFPA is committed to achieving by 2030. It has been estimated that the financing gaps for unmet need for family planning is \$59.9 billion; preventable maternal death \$103.6 billion; ending female genital mutilation \$2.1 billion; ending child marriage \$24.1 billion; and ending gender-based violence \$32.5 billion.

⁴ In the UNFPA report, ['Investing in three transformative results – realizing powerful returns'](#) (2022), it has been estimated that fully investing in ending unmet need for family planning the world realizes \$660 billion in economic benefits (2022–2050); fully investing in ending female genital

3. The UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, recognizes that the landscape of funding has changed and that a full range of sustainable development financing instruments is needed to scale-up investments. Therefore, the organization is moving from ‘funding to funding and financing’ – an ambition to catalyse on its own funding and expertise with the aim to leverage significant broader financing across a range of actors and financing instruments – domestic, and international, public, and private finance in support of the ICPD Programme of Action, underpinned by equity, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

4. As part of this approach, UNFPA identifies an invigorated and expanded partnerships with IFIs as one key strategic shift for accelerating the ICPD Programme of Action implementation and achieving the three transformative results by 2030. To support this process, a principal advisor on international development finance was appointed in 2022 to assist the organization to further expand and cement its engagement with IFIs, building already on a strong foundation.

5. All of which is set against a renewed spotlight on the role and purpose of IFIs more broadly as governments and policymakers are harnessing the use of IFIs instruments to respond to high financing needs, including concessional lending, blended financing, special drawing rights, debt financing, and grants to optimize and complement domestic resources to advance their development agenda.

6. In this regard, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (2015), UNFPA has focused on developing joint frameworks of collaboration with multilateral development banks to strengthen global, regional, and country-level synergies. UNFPA, in line with the United Nations development system reform and the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, is developing a new generation of integrated partnership and resource mobilization plans to strengthen existing engagements while establishing new innovative partnerships and instruments with relevant actors, including IFIs and the private sector. The new integrated partnership and resource mobilization plans will be more articulate about funding and financing for development to achieve the UNFPA transformative results and strengthen country-led partnerships in collaboration with bilateral mechanisms, IFIs, the private sector and other partners.

II. Partnership in action

7. IFIs are crucial partners for UNFPA in support of the ICPD agenda and SDG financing in general, given their presence across countries and sectors, their thought leadership, and ability to catalyse investments, including from the private sector. They have been supportive of advancing the ICPD principles, including through investing in health and well-being and advancing opportunities for individuals to live their lives to their fullest potential.

mutilation, the world realizes \$27.9 billion in economic benefits (2022-2050); and fully investing in ending child marriage, the world realizes \$5.1 trillion in economic benefits (2022-2050).

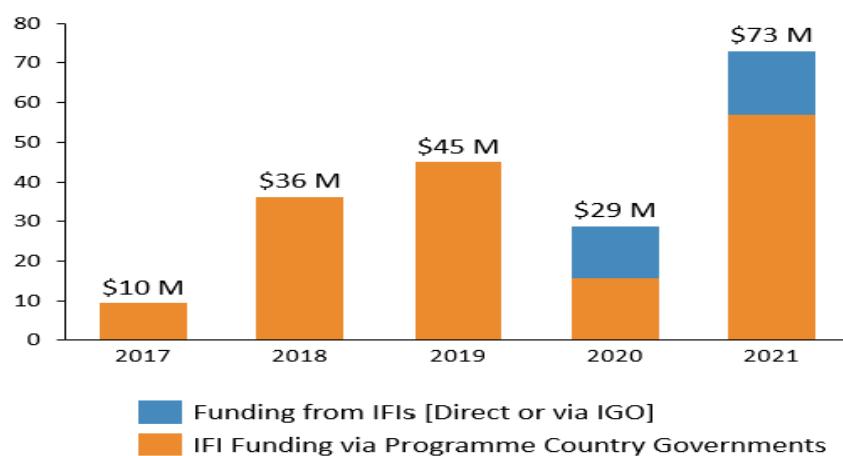
8. Over the past five years, UNFPA collaboration with IFIs has been in every geographical region and in support of all major outcomes of the UNFPA strategic plans. These partnerships have demonstrated the strong potential to further support countries' abilities to prioritize sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, including in the scale-up of domestic resource investments, while at the same time crowding in financing and identifying new innovative financing options, including private finance.

9. UNFPA collaboration with IFIs takes place both through technical cooperation and in implementation of programmes. These modalities can be basically classified as financial partnerships and non-financial partnerships, reflecting a rich and growing variety of evolving and innovative cooperation that is making a difference in the lives of people, especially for women and girls.

A. Financial partnerships

10. Over the years, UNFPA financing partnerships with the IFIs and governments focused on non-core resources have increased rapidly, culminating in agreements representing a record non-core revenue of more than \$73 million signed in 2021 alone. In 2022 UNFPA is expected to maintain similar levels of funding coming from IFIs, with a projected non-core revenue of around \$67 million (this figure includes pipelines).

Table 1. UNFPA financing partnership with IFIs, 2017-2021



11. Financial partnerships mostly represent a tripartite resolve between the IFI, UNFPA, and the countries accessing concessional lending or grants (the 'borrower'/government) to work together on implementing a specific project/programme. In certain cases, UNFPA receives direct grants from the IFIs, mostly in contexts where there may be national institutional capacity needs

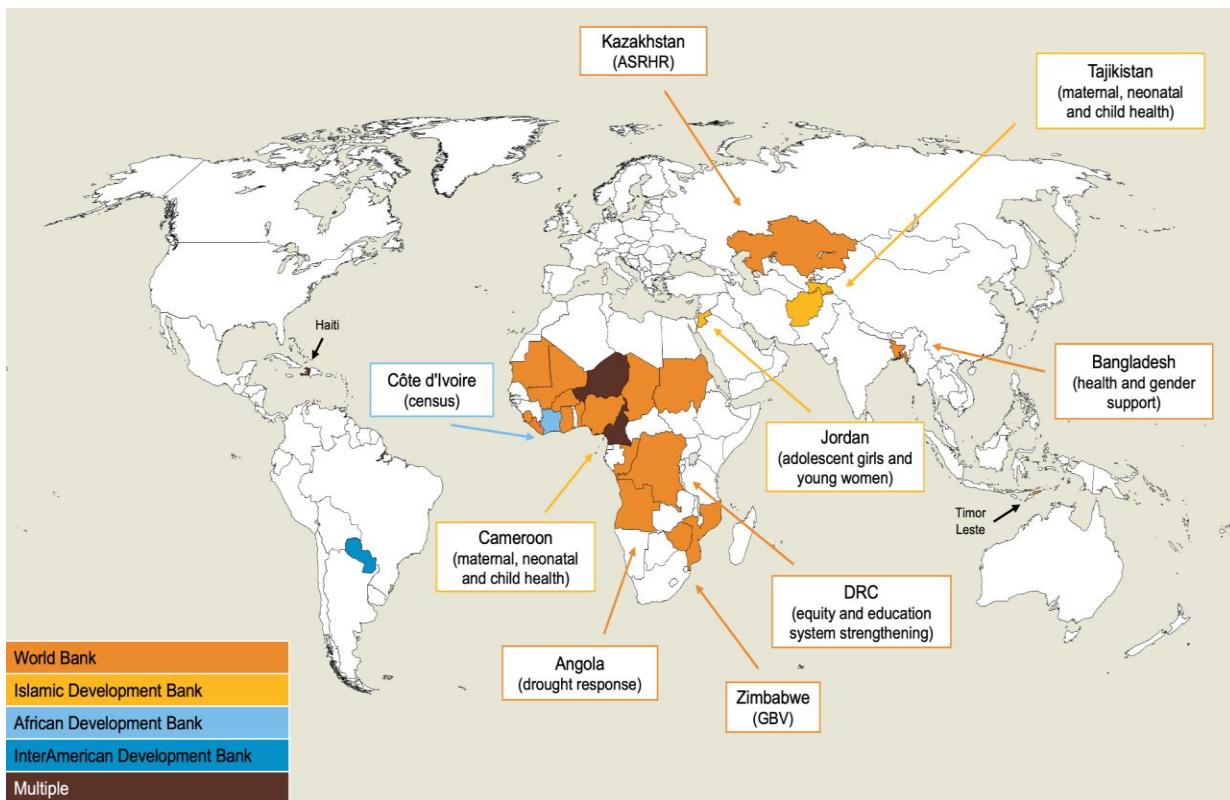
or in crisis contexts. The financing is very context specific and responds to the priorities at country or regional level; with clearly identified key results that must be achieved with such support within an agreed timeframe; and fully in line with the UNFPA strategic plan.

12. Currently, UNFPA manages 21 different projects with 4 different IFIs in 20 different countries and 5 different regions (Arab States; Latin America and the Caribbean; East and Southern Africa; West and Central Africa; and Asia and the Pacific).

13. The institutions which UNFPA has active agreements with are: African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and the World Bank Group. The total value of these agreements is approximately \$ 190 million.

14. These collaborations on the ground are in support of all major UNFPA strategic plan outcomes and include emergency COVID-19 pandemic responses and multi-sectoral responses to address gender and social inclusiveness; and prevention and response to gender-based violence.

Figure 1. Map of IFI funds to UNFPA programme country, with country highlights, 2017-2021



Note: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this 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 the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

15. As such, UNFPA employs its multifaceted expertise and extensive reach across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum, supporting countries in implementing IFIs' concessional loans or grants. It does this through assisting and strengthening the capacity of governments through project design and implementation, the provision of technical assistance and evidence; and management of loans/grants and integration of country efforts within regional and global frameworks. This includes addressing operational bottlenecks that might impact grants or loans performances, while at the same time strengthening the long-term capacity of governments around areas such as the provision of equitable access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, especially for the most vulnerable; systems strengthening to deliver quality reproductive health commodities, including the provision of modern contraceptives; and COVID-19 prevention, response, and recovery.

Reaching those furthest behind

UNFPA has rapidly expanded its response to growing global humanitarian needs as a result of conflict, natural disasters, and public health emergencies to support the significant needs of women and girls, and the most vulnerable. In crisis and conflict-affected settings, UNFPA is recognized by countries and IFIs as a critical implementing partner to ensure that SRHR and prevention and response to gender-based violence are fully addressed. At the same time, in many of these settings, UNFPA has already been on the ground over many years and has in place local partner networks, including at the community-level, due diligence processes, procurement and logistical structures and relevant oversight mechanisms. This is not only critical to bridging the access gap for IFIs, but also supports such institutions to better tailor their investments to specific country priorities, which in turn increases country leadership and ownership. UNFPA has the implementation capacity, experience and reach to provide rapid assistance to those most in need, especially women and girls; and has the sole leadership of the gender-based violence Area of Responsibility as part of the Global Protection Cluster under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.*

* The [Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#) is an inter-agency forum of United Nations and other humanitarian partners with the goal of strengthening the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

Strengthening supply chain systems

UNFPA plays a critical role strengthening national supply chains in close collaboration with several IFIs. IFIs are leveraging UNFPA expertise in providing upstream supply chain management support and quality control to deliver lifesaving products and SRHRR commodities to communities in need across the continuum. Through this work UNFPA supports governments and IFIs strengthen partnership and collaboration with regulatory bodies, provides technical assistance for local production and helps assure quality of SRH products at the last mile of supply chain and strengthening the national health systems. These initiatives have benefitted the national health systems of various countries in West, Central, Southern and East Africa; Eastern Europe; and Arab States. In the period 2017-2021, UNFPA sourced and delivered modern contraceptives and life-saving maternal health medicines using IFIs' resources for a total value of approximately \$29 million.

The COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA and IFIs joined forces in delivering a rapid and targeted response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In several countries, UNFPA, partnering with other United Nations entities and IFIs, worked to support the development and implementation of national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. UNFPA ensured that the needs of women, adolescents and young people were effectively addressed in national preparedness and response activities, particularly in relation to SRHRR and in the prevention and response to gender-based violence.

UNFPA, with IFI funding, also supported prevention and treatment interventions in health services and through community outreach, including by procuring personal protective equipment and hospital equipment (oxygen cylinders and ventilators) to help save lives. In addition, UNFPA supported the training of healthcare workers on proper utilization of the equipment and safeguard measures to mitigate infections in the provision of health services, including reproductive and maternal health services; coordinated with the government and development partners responsible for surveillance and contact tracing; developed isolation units within existing health facilities managed by UNFPA and worked to protect the provision of lifesaving SRHR services.

UNFPA was one of the six accredited entities^{**} to assist countries to execute the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility housed at the World Bank Group and mobilize and implement funds under this insurance window in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNFPA received \$12.9 million to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Facility closed on 30 April 2021.

** The six entities accredited by the facility are: WHO; UNICEF; UNFPA; FAO; WFP; IFRC and the World Bank (IBRD and IDA).

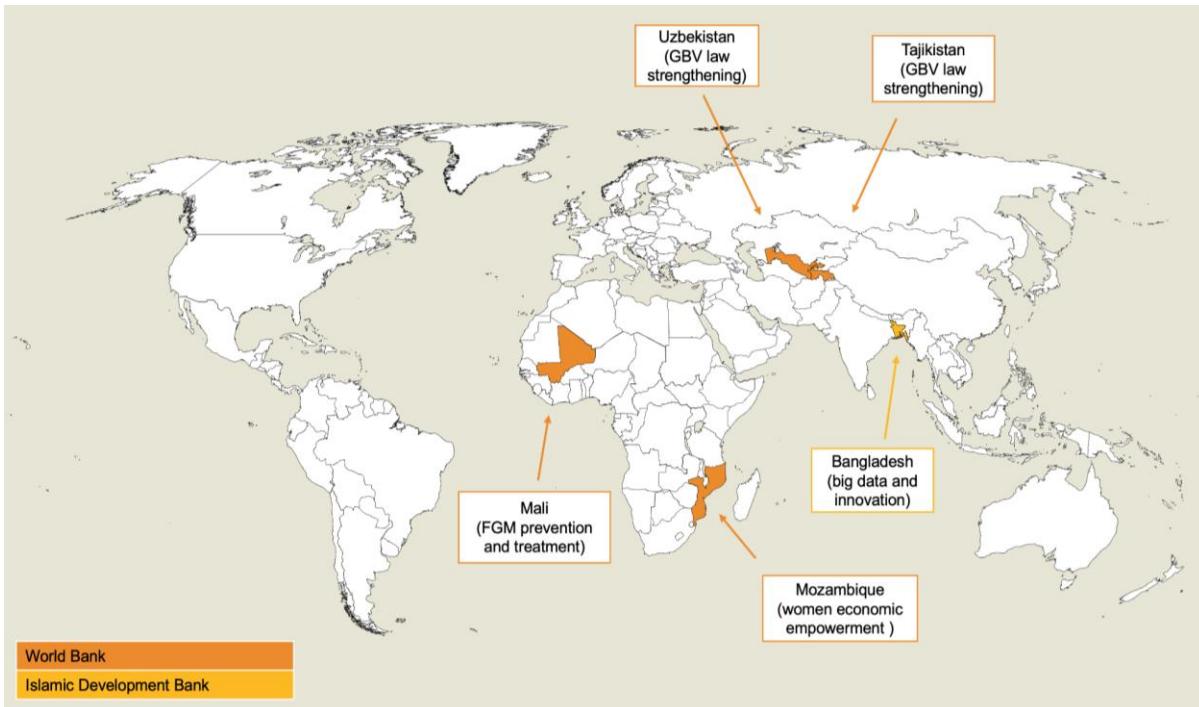
16. While IFI funding channelled through UNFPA is increasingly frequent, this has been up to now limited to specific contexts where UNFPA operations are on the ground, or in response to local institutional capacity needs, or to an urgent request for assistance in specific areas of the UNFPA mandate at country level. It is important to note that while UNFPA and IFIs have interdependent and mutually supportive agendas, the IFI missions – along with their financial frameworks, procedures, execution, and country-model approach – can make it challenging to programme resources directly to United Nations organizations or entities. Thus, the collaboration between UNFPA and IFIs is more encompassing than just a financial relationship, which is limited to specific non-core funding, as it seeks to also maximize a broader non-financial partnership, including collective thought leadership.

B. Non-financial partnerships

17. Non-financial collaboration between UNFPA and IFIs are growing based on mutual recognition of each entity's capacity, expertise, complementarity, and demand. UNFPA, for instance, is working with IFIs in assisting countries to explore new innovative financing modalities and leverage big data to engage adolescents, youth, and communities in strengthening the preparedness and response to COVID-19. UNFPA has collaborated with IFIs on research and data to inform the development and costing of national health financing strategies and investment cases. UNFPA has also engaged closely with IFIs in supporting country-led coordination processes to

ensure partner alignment with national processes and to enhance aid effectiveness, and this includes through engaging in sector-wide approaches (one plan, one budget, one monitoring and evaluation system). At the policy level, UNFPA is working with IFIs on sharpening the focus on human capital development investments; to expand access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services; and to strengthen the development of national standards, policies and clinical guidelines on reproductive and maternal health and ending harmful practices.

Figure 2. Map of selected IFI non-financial partnerships



Note: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this 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 the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries

III. Global, regional and country-level collaboration

18. The following section provides examples of both financial and non-financial collaboration modalities with IFIs at the global, regional, and country level over the last five years where specific areas of intervention are highlighted.

A. Global level

Non-financial partnerships

Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights

19. UNFPA has been collaborating with the World Bank Group Global Financing Facility (GFF),⁵ as part of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and SRHR. UNFPA and GFF are co-leads in the Action Coalition along with Member States, civil society, and private sector. This multi-stakeholder forum has been on-going since 2020, where all co-leads have worked together to co-create the Action Coalition's priorities, blueprint, and implementation plan. The Action Coalition is a collaborative space where all co-leads come together on joint global advocacy, evidence creation, and to inform programming in areas such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and bodily autonomy. Key focus areas are concerned with expanding access to comprehensive SRHR, fostering women and girls' agency, decision-making and bodily autonomy for SRHR, and supporting autonomous feminist and women-led organizations.

Population and development

20. UNFPA has been an active collaborator with the [Joint Data Centre](#) of the World Bank and UNHCR – specifically as a founding member of the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Person, and Statelessness Statistics. It has specifically contributed technical inputs on how census and civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems can better measure refugee and internally displaced populations in the [International Recommendations](#) on Refugee Statistics. More recently, UNFPA has been supporting specific direct technical assistance in Latin America, the Arab States and Central Asia for national statistics offices to use these international standards.

Census and civil registration and vital statistics systems

21. The UNFPA centre of excellence for civil registration and vital statistics systems has been providing peer review to the World Bank [Identity for Development](#) (ID4D) programme as they develop their next release of [global estimates](#) of persons lacking proof of legal identity. This collaboration supports efforts to monitor SDG target 16.9 on legal identity for all, and leverages UNFPA expertise in population data and demographic estimation.

22. Also through the centre of excellence for CRVS systems, UNFPA and the GFF show-cased lessons learned and country progress on gender-transformative CRVS system strengthening at the third [CRVS and Gender Conference](#), hosted by UNFPA and UNICEF in October 2022.

⁵ The [Global Financing Facility \(GFF\)](#) for Women, Children and Adolescents was established in 2015 as an innovative financing platform to scale investments for women and girls, in support of the Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) strategy, in particular by leveraging domestic resources complemented by external resources, including World Bank Group IDA and IBRD financing.

Investment Cases – Financing for development

23. The World Bank Group is an active participant in the Interagency Working Group on Costing of national health strategies, including SRHR along with UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP and UNICEF. The Bank’s health economics have played a central role in the planning and review of the online [OneHealth Tool](#) vendor selection, wireframe and broader planning.

B. Regional

Financial partnerships

Women’s empowerment and the demographic dividend

24. The Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project (SWEDD) is a regional flagship project that was approved by the Executive Board of the World Bank Group in 2014 with the goal to empower adolescent girls and women and increase their access to quality education and sexual and reproductive, child and maternal health services, in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. UNFPA, along with the West African Health Organization and the African Union, partners with the World Bank Group in its implementation. UNFPA has provided regional coordination and technical leadership. Results achieved so far through the collaboration include an additional 4.3 million women using modern contraceptives between 2016 and 2018; a reduction in the number of child marriages; and approximately 100,000 young women and girls benefitting from empowerment.⁶ The project is expected to expand to a third phase in 2023.

C. Country level

Financial partnerships

Côte d’Ivoire – Census

25. As part of the fifth General Census of Population and Housing in Côte d’Ivoire, the African Development Bank and UNFPA partnered to support the implementation and development of an inclusive service delivery to the Government of Côte d’Ivoire. This specific initiative aims to provide a response to the country’s economic and social challenges by building the administration’s capacity for a successful implementation of the country’s national development plan.

26. One important component of the project is supporting the National Institute of Statistics in conducting surveys, general population and housing censuses, data processing, and analysis in order to have better knowledge of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population with a special focus on gender inequality.

⁶ Source: Commission on Population and Development, fifty-fifth session. [Report of the Secretary General](#), Programme, and Interventions for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD in the context of population and sustainable development, in particular sustained and inclusive growth.

Tajikistan – Maternal health and cervical cancer

27. UNFPA is currently working with the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Development Bank toward improving maternal, neonatal, and child health in the four districts of the Khatlon Region. As part of this collaboration, UNFPA, in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank, developed and updated standards and clinical guidelines on cervical cancer screening. The updated protocol has been used as a framework to train midwives, obstetricians and gynaecologists in the regions of Baljuvon and Khovaling. Additionally, this partnership trains health service providers on maternal, neonatal, and child health related disciplines to create overall better access to quality services for women and children.

Bangladesh – Sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence

28. UNFPA is working with the Government of Bangladesh to implement the World Bank Group's Health and Gender Support Project to strengthen integrated SRHR and GBV prevention and response services across the entire Cox's Bazar district. Through this timely investment, UNFPA is working to upgrade health facilities and strengthen the provision of SRH services, as well as enhancing the Government's capacity to deliver integrated and enhanced SRH and GBV services in the Cox's Bazar district, including in the humanitarian camps hosting Rohingya refugees. This initiative is the result of a long-standing collaboration at various levels between the World Bank, UNFPA, and the Government of Bangladesh on several areas from COVID-19 pandemic response to health system strengthening.

Democratic Republic of the Congo – gender-based violence

29. UNFPA, through World Bank Group financing, is supporting the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to implement GBV response activities under the Equity and Reinforcement Project of Educational System (*Projet d'Équité et de Renforcement de Système Éducatif*). The GBV prevention and response project started during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been an instrumental tool in providing a survivor-centred and human rights-based approach towards GBV survivors in the country. With World Bank financing, UNFPA was able to create a referral mechanism for the prevention, alerting, and emotional support of survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Kazakhstan – Adolescent sexual and reproductive health

30. As a result of a partnership between UNFPA, the World Bank Group, and the Ministry of Health, Kazakhstan's Health Development Policy 2025 now prioritizes strengthening youth-friendly health centres. A package of new regulations was developed and centred on increasing coverage and access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. With support from UNFPA and the World Bank Group, the Ministry of Health was also able to create a legal framework, develop clinical and operational standards, and institutionalize youth-friendly health centres (including accreditation of facilities) while strengthening their capacity.

Cameroon – Universal health coverage

31. Together with the Government of Cameroon, the Islamic Development Bank and ILO Social Finance, UNFPA piloted a ‘Micro-Takaful’ (a microinsurance scheme compliant with Sharia Principles) to address maternal, neonatal and child mortality in a number of rural communities with a view to learning, adjusting, and scaling-up as part of the roll-out of universal health coverage. Within the framework of the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Support Project, Micro-Takaful is a solidarity guarantee, underpinned by a community and social mobilization mechanism for risk-pooling, and further operationalizes efforts by the Government to continue or expand prepayment schemes to address out-of-pocket payments. Overall, it aims to reduce preventable neonatal and maternal mortality by improving sustainable financial and equitable access to maternal and neonatal health services.

Non-financial partnerships

Jordan and Bangladesh – Innovation

32. UNFPA in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank is working to scale up innovative solutions in support of adolescents and youth. In Jordan, the partnership is currently reviewing the potential of a development impact bond focused on the health and well-being of adolescent girls, while in Bangladesh it is leveraging big data in the engagement of adolescents, youth and communities to enhance COVID-19 preparedness and response. The Islamic Development Bank and UNFPA in Bangladesh launched a digital platform for young people to access information on reproductive health and other critical issues during the pandemic.

Mali – Ending female genital mutilation

33. UNFPA is supporting standards, policies and clinical guidelines on reproductive and maternal health and harmful practices in Mali, where a cooperation between UNFPA and the World Bank Group exists to end female genital mutilation (through prevention and response).

Tajikistan – Gender-based violence

34. UNFPA is working with the World Bank Group to support Tajikistan to formulate, implement, monitor and report on GBV as part of the country’s development programme operations. At the same time, the partnership seeks to strengthen the law on prevention of domestic violence and update the country’s healthy life-style education modules so that they include GBV-related aspects.

Mozambique – Gender-based violence

35. The World Bank Group regional team recently undertook a mission to Mozambique aimed at designing a new project on women’s economic empowerment, which would contain a component on GBV. As part of the mission, the team met with UNFPA to learn about the organization’s GBV programming, including through the Spotlight Initiative. As part of the discussions, the World Bank Group demonstrated a particular interest in how to link GBV and

SRH interventions with economic empowerment activities for women and girls, which offered a potential partnership opportunity for UNFPA.

IV. Advancing and strengthening the IFI partnership

36. Substantial development financing is one of the most urgently needed enablers to facilitate the realization of the three transformative results, ICPD Programme of Action and, more broadly, achieving the SDGs. It requires strengthened, innovative, and effective mechanisms of financing that complement traditional sources to achieve greater and sustainable impact, underpinned by heightened attention to predictability, efficiency, and equity. UNFPA has already begun the transition from funding to ‘funding and financing’ to include strengthening its collaboration with IFIs at all levels. In fact, the present overview of the range of the present IFI partnerships also indicate the various pathways available to further deepen the relationship (financial, non-financial) based on each institution’s specific comparative advantage and complementarity for the advancement of the ICPD Agenda, leveraging key entry points.

37. Going forward, UNFPA will intensify its collaboration with IFIs at the global, regional, and country levels. Senior management will champion a greater vigour of engagement with IFIs across all levels of the organization, and with enhanced support to country offices to take this forward as an integral part of the ‘funding and financing’ ambition. This will include working together to support country leadership in the elaboration and implementation of equitable and costed national development and financing strategies; harnessing evidence-based interventions; linking to innovation; public and private-sector financing; amplifying the utilization of high-quality and timely data; facilitating costed, cost-benefit and financial analysis to inform priority-setting, investment cases, medium-term expenditure frameworks and public expenditure reviews, all with the aim to enhance impact and deliver for women and girls. At the same time, the extensive field presence of UNFPA in all contexts across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum will be maximized in support of the collaboration with IFIs. Further opportunities for strategic engagement and thought leadership with IFIs will be sought in areas such as human capital development, in crisis and conflict-affected settings, in relation to climate change and pandemic preparedness, social protection, and in the development of catalytic instruments to reach the most vulnerable. The potential partnerships on climate change are especially important and will be sought out in this regard.

38. UNFPA is also committed to complete key pieces of work over the course of 2023 that will further help guide and facilitate the expansion of collaboration with IFIs at all levels. This includes a paper on its approach to IFIs; innovative financing strategy; and the development of a transparent methodology to effectively capture the return on investment from such collaboration.

39. There are, at the same time, aspects of the engagement that will need to be further tackled so that the partnership can be maximized to its full potential. This includes in the area of cross-financing where non-concessional lending predominantly at country-level is channelled directly

from the IFIs to the United Nations, with programme country Government agreement. It is worth highlighting that for many IFIs, direct contracting of United Nations agencies (including UNFPA) is not available. It is often only possible when certain conditions are met, such as urgent country assistance needs, due to emergencies (natural disasters or conflicts); or beneficiary government capacity constraints; These arrangements, when in place, are often time-bound and restricted

40. In addition, IFIs have their own set of policies, rules, and regulations regarding procurement principles, safeguards, and financial management, which may not be coherent with UNFPA financial rules and regulations. These sets of policies are frequently set in place to respond to the specific role that IFIs play in the provision of advisory services and financial support to countries, which can differ from the global role United Nations agencies play.

41. In the past years, UNFPA and its IFI partners have worked on developing operational and legal frameworks that can make the respective fiduciary systems more aligned and integrated. In this regard, UNFPA has established mutually recognized contractual framework agreements with four IFIs. The present agreed standard models cover the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank Group. These frameworks aim to make it easier for Governments to access IFI financing in partnership with UNFPA. At the same time, to expand the collaboration, there needs to be a mutual understanding of institutional procedures and limitations on all sides to avoid the risk that transaction costs will outweigh their development benefits. For this reason, UNFPA, while developing staff literacy on modes of engagement and regulations of IFIs and working to advance policy flexibility, is also investing in developing catalytic projects/programmes with such institutions, aimed at developing trust through proven results.

42. UNFPA has engaged actively in country-led coordination platforms with the goal to support countries to harness development efforts to advance the SDGs, including the three transformative results. Considering the magnitude generally of IFI financing, particularly at country level, the importance of leveraging such country-led coordination platforms to maximize coordination and alignment of development assistance, including IFI financing, is essential. Thus, it will be important to continue to strengthen government-led collaboration processes and to support the increased participation of IFIs in such processes to have the greatest impact.

V. Conclusion

43. UNFPA is committed to expand its collaboration and proactively seek out new opportunities with IFIs to deliver on its strategic plan, drawing on the positive cooperation over the last years – with room for further growth, considering the significant needs, while working collectively to strengthen alignment across institutions. As noted above, UNFPA has identified key pieces of work that it will take forward during 2023 to further facilitate the process.

44. At the same time, it is worth reiterating that the collaboration with IFIs, particularly on the financing-side, is about supplementing non-core resources and not about substituting for

traditional donor assistance, especially core resources. Hence, it is vitally important to continue promoting and protecting core financing, especially with bilateral donors, as a central part of the UNFPA funding and financing approach.

45. In deepening the engagement and expanding the opportunities with IFIs, it would be helpful if Member States, in their roles participating in the governing bodies of IFIs, could likewise voice their support for enhanced collaboration with UNFPA and the incorporation of efforts to achieve the three transformative results across IFIs policies, programmes and operations. In addition, the ongoing support of Member States to such institutions can be leveraged to reinforce synergies, secure pathways for partnership and seek opportunities to further strengthen collaboration (whether financial or non-financial) at all levels, especially at country level, while also helping to overcome bottlenecks or impediments that may impede the relationships with IFIs from realizing their full potential.

46. As the world confronts unprecedented challenges, now is the time to strengthen and evolve UNFPA partnerships, including with the IFIs, to catalyse the full range of collaboration (financial, non-financial) to achieve the three transformative results and deliver for women and girls. As an African proverb tells us, “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.”
