



## United Nations Population Fund

**For Prelims:** [Fertility Rate](#), [ECOSOC](#), [United Nations Population Fund](#), [United Nations General Assembly](#), [Population and Development issues](#), [Gender equality](#), [United Nations Population Award](#), [World Population Day](#), [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

**For Mains:** [Significance of State of World Population Report](#), [Issues Related to Population and Development](#), [Issues Related to Sexual and Reproductive Health](#)

### What is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)?

#### ▪ About:

- **UNFPA** is the **United Nations** sexual and reproductive health agency.
- The United Nations Fund for Population Activities was established as a **trust** fund in 1967.
- The agency began operating in 1969 as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the same year the **United Nations General Assembly** declared “parents have the exclusive right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children.”
- In 1987, it was officially renamed the United Nations Population Fund, reflecting its lead role in the United Nations system in the area of population.

#### ▪ Mission:

- Its mission is to deliver a world where **every pregnancy is wanted**, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

#### ▪ Motto:

- Its motto is “Ensuring rights and choices for all.”

#### ▪ UNFPA in the UN System:

- UNFPA is a **subsidiary organ** of the United Nations General Assembly.
- It plays a unique role within the United Nations system to address population and development issues, emphasizing **reproductive health and gender equality**, within the context of the ICPD Programme of Action and international development goals.
- UNFPA receives overall policy guidance from the General Assembly and the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**.
  - It reports to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board of 36 UN Member States on administrative, financial, and programme matters and receives overall policy guidance from the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
  - The **Executive Board** is composed of 36 members, eight from Africa, seven from Asia and the Pacific, four from Eastern Europe, five from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 12 from Western Europe and other developed countries.
- The Fund collaborates closely with many other development and humanitarian agencies (particularly **WHO**, **UNICEF**, **UNDP**, and **UNAIDS**) in the field.

#### ▪ Intergovernmental and Interagency Processes:

- To be an effective development partner, UNFPA needs to stay informed about challenges countries face in improving the lives of their people as well as United Nations responses.
- To accomplish this, the Fund **contributes to the debates** of some 150 agenda items of the General Assembly, participates in the functional and regional intergovernmental

commissions of ECOSOC, and **works closely with other entities**, such as the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Human Rights Council.

- It also provides technical inputs to the General Assembly as it formulates policies related to the UNFPA mandate.
- UNFPA is **one of four founding members** of the UN Development Group (UNDG), which was created by the Secretary-General in 1997 to improve the coherence of UN development at the country level.
- UNFPA also participates in **interagency collaboration and processes**. For instance, it is a member of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which is the main instrument for executive heads of the United Nations system to coordinate their actions and policies.
  - The CEB is chaired by the **Secretary-General** of the United Nations and meets twice annually. In 2007 UNDG was placed under the umbrella of the CEB.

▪ **Bodies:**

◦ **Audit and Investigation:**

- The **Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS)** covers two functions, internal audit, and investigation.
- The Director, OAIS reports directly to the Executive Director of UNFPA and provides **independent and objective assurance** as well as advisory services designed to add value and improve UNFPA operations.

◦ **Oversight Advisory Committee:**

- A five-member Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC) is established to assist the Executive Director of UNFPA in fulfilling his/her responsibilities **regarding financial management** and reporting, external audit matters, risk management, the systems of internal control and accountability, and the oversight process (the internal audit, evaluation, investigation, and ethics functions).

◦ **Independent Evaluation Office:**

- Evaluation at UNFPA serves **three main purposes**. It strengthens accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and learning.
- The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) reports directly to the Executive Board, including through the Annual Report on Evaluation.

◦ **Executive Board:**

- The Executive Board **provides intergovernmental support** to and supervises the activities of UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS in accordance with the policy guidance of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the **United Nations Charter**.

▪ **Mandate:**

- The mandate of UNFPA, as established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1973 and reaffirmed in 1993, is:
  - To build the knowledge and the capacity to respond to needs in population and **family planning**.
  - To promote awareness in both **developed** and developing countries of population problems and possible strategies to deal with these problems.
  - To assist their population problems in the forms and means best suited to the individual countries' needs.
  - To assume a leading role in the United Nations system in **promoting population programmes**, and coordinating projects supported by the Fund.

▪ **Goal:**

- The goal of UNFPA is **to ensure sexual and reproductive rights** and choices for all, especially women and young people, so that they can access high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, **maternal health care**, and comprehensive sexuality education.
  - It promotes gender equality and empowers women, girls, and young people to take control of their bodies and their futures.
  - It works with partners in more than 150 countries to provide access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services.
  - Its goal is to **end unmet needs** for family planning, preventable maternal death, and gender-based violence and harmful practices including child marriage and **female genital mutilation by 2030**.

## What is the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)?

### ▪ About:

- In 1994 the landmark [International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\)](#), held in Cairo, transformed global thinking on population and development issues and **defined a bold agenda**, placing people's [dignity](#) and rights at the heart of [sustainable development](#).
- There, 179 governments adopted the ICPD Programme of Action. It affirmed that inclusive sustainable development is not possible without prioritizing human rights, including reproductive rights; empowering women and girls; and addressing inequalities as well as the needs, aspirations, and rights of individual women and men.
- ICPD set the standard for people-centered development, guiding national policies and programmes for the implementation of the Programme of Action by governments, in collaboration with parliaments and civil society, including women and youth-led organizations, the private sector, community groups, and individuals in the grassroots level.
- The ICPD Programme and the [2019 Nairobi Statement](#), a recommitment to that programme within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, have guided UNFPA work since.

### ▪ The ICPD Agenda Today:

- Almost 30 years since the landmark conference in Cairo, people-centered development has enabled numerous gains, which are now at risk of reversal.
- Today, progress is threatened by multifaceted crises, backsliding on the rights and choices of women and girls, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the polarization of the sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda.
- While there is progressive activism for social justice, [climate action](#), and [equality](#), the world is at a critical inflection point to preserve the hard-won gains and deliver on the vision of the ICPD agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## What is the Funding Mechanism of UNFPA?

- UNFPA is **not supported by the UN's regular budget** but is entirely supported by voluntary contributions of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and foundations and individuals.
- It mobilizes financial resources from governments and other partners to support programmes that aim to achieve the "**three zeros**" namely zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero harmful practices and gender-based violence and accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- **Core Resources:**
  - Core resources are contributions without restrictions.
  - UNFPA uses core funding to effectively provide essential sexual and reproductive health services to those most in need.
  - Every year, UNFPA launches a campaign to mobilize core resources from a diverse group of donors.
- **Non-Core Resources:**
  - Non-core resources include the following funding and financing instruments:
    - **Thematic funds** such as UNFPA Supplies, the Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund, the Humanitarian Action Thematic Fund and the Population Data Thematic Fund.
    - United Nations-pooled and inter-agency mechanisms like the UNFPA-[UNICEF](#) Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage; the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation; and the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.
- **Other Resources:**
  - Other resources include **consolidated global financing mechanisms** and innovative financing models and instruments such as blended finance, impact investment bonds,

financial and insurance products, social entrepreneurship, debt swaps, and guarantees.

## What are the Approaches Adopted by UNFPA?

- The work of UNFPA is based on the premise that all human beings are **entitled to equal rights and protections**.
- It focuses on women and young people because these are groups whose ability to exercise their right to sexual and reproductive health is often compromised.
- It works on their behalf and is informed by an understanding of population dynamics, human rights, and cultural sensitivities.
  - **Human Rights-Based Approach:**
    - UNFPA adopts a **human rights-based approach** throughout its work. This entails **educating individuals and communities** about their human rights so that they can then demand the respect and basic services they are entitled to. This approach also involves **empowering governments to fulfill these rights**.
    - UNFPA was one of the agencies that in 2003 adopted the **UN Common Understanding on a Human-Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)** to Development Cooperation, which clarifies how human rights standards and principles should be put into practice in programming.
  - **Rights vs. Needs Approach:**
    - Before 1997, most UN development agencies pursued a 'basic needs' approach i.e. they identified basic requirements of beneficiaries and either supported initiatives to improve service delivery or advocated for their fulfillment.
    - UNFPA and its partners now work to fulfill the rights of people, rather than the needs of beneficiaries.
    - A rights-based approach **develops the capacity of duty-bearers** to meet their obligations and encourages rights holders to claim their rights. Governments have three levels of obligation, to respect, protect, and fulfil every right.
  - **Culturally Sensitive Approaches:**
    - In 2002, UNFPA set out to work in a more **culturally sensitive manner** so as to achieve better and more sustainable results with its programming.
    - Decades of UNFPA experience with the faith-based sector have gone into producing Guidelines for Engaging Faith-Based Organisations as Cultural Agents of Change.
    - They outline a framework of partnerships, including principles, the strategies and operationalization at national, regional and global levels.
    - To further such relationships, UNFPA has created a valuable resource for development partners, the **Global Interfaith Network for Population and Development**.
  - **Results-Based Management at UNFPA:**
    - UNFPA is committed to achieving **three ambitious, people-centred transformative** results by 2030. These transformative results are:
      - Ending preventable maternal deaths;
      - Ending the unmet need for family planning; and
      - Ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

## What are the Major Initiatives of UNFPA?

- UNFPA works in more than 150 countries and territories that are home to the vast majority of the world's people.
- Guided by the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), UNFPA partners with governments, civil society, and other agencies to advance its mission.
- The ICPD **Beyond 2014 Global Report**, released in February 2014, revealed how much progress has been made and the significant work that remains to be done.
- The actions and recommendations identified in the report are crucial for achieving the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and its linkage with the post-2015 development agenda.
- **Three zeros by 2030:** In 2018, UNFPA launched efforts to achieve three transformative results, also known as the three zeros, by 2030:



- **Ending Unmet Need For Family Planning:** Zero unmet need for family planning. It is the world's single-largest provider of donated contraceptives to developing countries, and its programmes increase the availability of contraceptives and dismantle barriers to services.
- **Ending Preventable Maternal Death:** Zero preventable maternal deaths. It has helped strengthen health systems, train and educate health workers and midwives, and improve access to a full range of reproductive health services. Its support for [women's maternal health](#) is especially significant in 32 countries with the highest rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.
- **Ending Gender-Based Violence And Harmful Practices:** Zero [gender-based violence](#) and harmful practices. It works with policymakers, justice systems, and health systems and engages men and boys to advance gender equality. It protects survivors of gender-based violence by providing a combination of essential services, including in humanitarian crises.
- **Working at Country Level:** In line with the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, UNFPA works closely with and always at the request of governments.
  - UNFPA supports them in the achievement of the goals outlined in the ICPD Programme of Action including **universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights**, including family planning, and the reduction of maternal death and disability.
  - As the leading multilateral agency on population and reproductive health, UNFPA plays a crucial role in making sure that population-poverty linkages and the ICPD rights-based agenda are integrated into planning at the country level, in coordination with other agencies.
- **Bringing Data Into the Picture:** Information about a country's population, growth, characteristics, living conditions, spatial distribution, and physical resources is vital for policy formulation, planning, and implementation.
  - The **Population Situation Analysis** is one of the tools created by UNFPA to help countries integrate population dynamics, reproductive health, and gender issues into national development strategies.
- **Regional and Global Advocacy:**
  - UNFPA also works at the **regional and global levels** to raise awareness of its issues.
  - It publishes annually its flagship [State of World Population report](#), supports exhibitions such as Too Young to Wed, and participates in the Global Education First Initiative, which **brings together world leaders** and advocates to strengthen the global movement for high-quality education.
  - UNFPA also works closely with **civil society and parliamentarians**.
  - At numerous regional, thematic, and international forums, it makes a **strong, evidence-based case** for why population matters and for why the ICPD Programme of Action must be firmly integrated into any international development priorities.
- **Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems:**
  - The Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CoE-CRVS) is a **global resource hub** that actively supports national, regional, and global efforts to develop, strengthen, and **scale up sustainable civil registration** and vital statistics (CRVS) systems that work for all, especially women and girls.
  - The CoE-CRVS was founded in 2015 at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada). In August 2021 the CoE-CRVS transitioned to UNFPA to expand the Centre's reach through UNFPA's global network with activities in over 150 countries. The CoE-CRVS is funded by Global Affairs Canada, IDRC, and UNFPA.
- **Strategic Plan 2022-2025:**
  - It invites stakeholders worldwide to join UNFPA on its journey to achieve access to sexual and reproductive health for all, realise reproductive rights, and **accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action** of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).
  - The 2030 deadline to achieve **the three transformative goals**, ending the unmet need for family planning, preventing maternal deaths, and eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices is approaching.
  - The **new strategic plan** prioritizes the most vulnerable groups, including those living in [poverty](#), with disabilities, or from marginalized communities, by focusing on the rights and inclusive participation of women, adolescents, and youth as key agents of change.

- **The Supply Chain Partner For Sexual And Reproductive Health And Rights:**
  - UNFPA is the lead agency within the United Nations system for the procurement of **sexual and reproductive health (SRH)** supplies and the world's largest public-sector procurer of contraceptives.
- **United Nations Population Award:**
  - Each year, the Committee for the [United Nations Population Award](#) honours an individual and/or institution in recognition of outstanding contributions to population and reproductive health questions and to their solutions.
- **World Population Day:**
  - [World Population Day](#), which seeks to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, was established by the then-Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989, an outgrowth of the interest generated by the Day of Five Billion, which was observed on 11 July 1987.
  - It is aimed to **enhance awareness of [population issues](#)**, including their relations to the environment and development.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Mains

**Q.** Critically examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty or poverty is the main cause of population increase in India. **(2015)**

**Q.** Why do some of the most prosperous regions of India have an adverse sex ratio for women? Give your arguments. **(2014)**

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