

THE MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH THEMATIC FUND

Advancing Towards Universal Health Coverage

ANNUAL REPORT

2019





DELIVERING A WORLD WHERE
EVERY PREGNANCY IS WANTED,
EVERY CHILDBIRTH IS SAFE,
AND EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S
POTENTIAL IS FULFILLED

Cover photo:

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November 2019. Winner of the 2020 MHTF photo contest.

Ms. Ayome Pitchou, 27, at her antenatal care visit with her midwife in Souanké, in the Sangha Region of the far north-western region of the Republic of the Congo. This facility is part of the national EmONC network developed through collaboration between UNFPA and the Ministry of Health.



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ACRONYMS

EmONC	Emergency obstetric and newborn care
GIS	Geographic information system
H6	WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UN Women & World Bank Group
ICM	International Confederation of Midwives
ICPD	International conference on population and development
Jhpiego	Johns Hopkins University Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics
LGBTI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other sexuality, sex and gender people
MPDSR	Maternal death surveillance and response
MHTF	Maternal and newborn health thematic fund
MNH	Maternal and newborn health
MPDSR	Maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
SRMNH	Sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health
SRMNAH	Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health
SRMNCAH	Sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFCU	United Nations Federal Credit Union
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund (MHTF) would like to thank all its funding partners, implementing partners, staff and stakeholders for their support and collaboration in 2019.

Thanks to the generous support from Sweden, Germany, Luxembourg and Poland, the MHTF was able to support 32 countries with the highest rates of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity, in improving equitable access to quality sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health (SRMNH) services. We are also grateful for individual and private-sector contributions made through Friends of UNFPA and by Laerdal Global Health.

The bold, integrated and successful initiatives noted in this report would not have been possible without the collaboration of our public and private sector partners at global, regional and national levels. Among many others, they include the International Confederation of Midwives, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, the International Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons, Operation Fistula, Columbia University's Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program, Johns Hopkins University and its Program for International Education in Gynecology and Obstetrics and the Woodrow Wilson Center. A listing of our Campaign to End Fistula partners is included in Annex 1; we gratefully acknowledge their contributions.

Our sincere thanks go to our United Nations colleagues around the globe, including to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the World Bank Group. We are grateful for their collaboration and coordination on sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health. Together, we continue to build synergies, support national governments, and demonstrate our leadership, commitment and strong partnership through platforms such as the H6 partnership.

UNFPA acknowledges with gratitude the support of its dedicated technical and programme staff at headquarter level, across 32 MHTF-supported countries, and our advisers in five regional offices. They are instrumental in supporting countries to improve maternal and newborn health as part of a broader focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Working together, we continue to make a difference and positively impact the lives of women and girls everywhere. Our collective efforts are bearing fruit as we move towards ending preventable maternal mortality by 2030.

President of Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta stated in his inaugural address at the 2019 Nairobi ICPD25 Summit: *"Empowering women essentially empowers all our families. It empowers our societies. It empowers our nations. It empowers our world."*

FOREWORD

The UNFPA Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund (MHTF) supports global efforts to end preventable maternal and newborn deaths and deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The MHTF remains focused on strengthening health systems, improving quality of care, and providing equitable access to integrated sexual and reproductive health services.

Making motherhood safer is at the core of UNFPA's mandate. More than 800 women die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. For every woman who dies, an estimated 20 or 30 encounter injuries, infections or disabilities. Most of these deaths and injuries are preventable.

Last year, the MHTF focused on 32 high-priority countries across five regions. Nearly 29,000 midwives received education and training while 2,700 midwifery tutors upgraded their skills. Investments were made to strengthen more than 400 midwifery schools, as well as bolster maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response systems. The MHTF also established health facility networks in four countries and supported more than 8,000 fistula repair surgeries, helping restore the dignity of some of the most marginalized women and girls.

With health systems stretched and priorities shifting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA is doing all it can to ensure that sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health remains a priority. This means working to ensure that health workers, including midwives, are protected so that every woman can access high-quality care during pregnancy and childbirth.

UNFPA appreciates the collaborative efforts of all our partners, including governments, civil society organizations, academic institutions and other development agencies. Together, let us continue to build inclusive health systems, and let us do everything in our power to assure that every woman and newborn receives the 'care with caring' that they need and deserve.



Natalia Kanem
Dr. Natalia Kanem
Executive Director,
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Fund (UNFPA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 2008, the [Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund](#) (MHTF) continued to function as UNFPA's flagship programme on maternal and newborn health, accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNFPA's transformative result on ending preventable maternal mortality. In 2019, the MHTF marked the first year of implementation of Phase III of the MHTF Business Plan (2018-2022), as 2018 was a transition year. The MHTF built on its strength to offer a unique platform for delivering on the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030), using an integrated, holistic, rights-based, person-centred, life course approach to the delivery of comprehensive sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health services.

The MHTF is a contributor to realizing universal health coverage through its focus on an available, accessible and acceptable health workforce – midwives – who can provide quality services through a functional, accessible and well-distributed emergency obstetric and newborn care (EmONC) network comprising health system facilities. The MHTF has taken steps in the past year towards realizing the vision of universal health coverage by: (1) providing maternal and newborn health care and creating demand for services; (2) improving the quality of care by focusing on quality midwifery care, EmONC, and maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response (MPDSR); and (3) by preventing and treating fistula across the globe to also make sure that the poorest of the poor can fulfil their basic human right to a healthy life. With an overall focus on enhanced national ownership, health system strengthening

Using strategically designed, high-impact, catalytic programmes with multi-stakeholder engagement, and numerous global and national partners, the MHTF continued to roll out and operationalize the six pillars¹ of UNFPA's Global Midwifery Strategy (2018-2030); build, strengthen and monitor EmONC networks; strengthen MPDSR systems; and support the implementation of the 2018 Secretary-General's resolution² on intensification of efforts to end fistula within a decade (by 2030). These key areas were further integrated with other SRH programmes, including post-partum and post-abortion family planning, prevention and treatment of HIV and sexually transmitted infections, cervical cancer screenings and treatment, comprehensive abortion care (to the full extent of the law) including post abortion care.

In 2019, the MHTF helped educate and train over 28,800 midwives, among whom over 9,000 graduated from higher education programmes, including with a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree. Over 400 midwifery schools received training equipment, simulation models and books, and 2,700 midwifery tutors benefited from upgrades in teaching and clinical skills. The leadership and advocacy capacities of midwifery associations continued to be strengthened as they were fully engaged in the celebration of the International Day of the Midwife and in various policy dialogues. Roughly one third of MHTF countries are now able to deploy over 75 per cent of newly graduated midwives within one year.

Using a human rights-based, gender-responsive approach, the MHTF helped restore the dignity of some of the most marginalized women and girls who suffer

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